



















**Cheap Book Production In The  
United States, 1870 To 1891**





# Cheap Book Production In The United States, 1870 To 1891

*By*

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A.M., University of Illinois, 1936

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Library Science in the Graduate School  
of the University of Illinois, 1936*

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY

URBANA, ILLINOIS

1937

**PRINTED IN U.S.A.**

***Lithoprinted by Edwards Brothers, Inc., Lithoprinters and Publishers  
Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1937***



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## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, until the early 1830's, very little attention had been paid to the matter of supplying books at a price the masses could afford to pay. The price of books and the scarcity of money were such that book buying was commonly indulged in only by the well-to-do.<sup>1</sup> With the establishment by Lord Brougham in England in 1827, of the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, and with a more or less world-wide awakening, steps were taken to provide larger numbers of people with reading matter, especially reading matter of an informational character. This movement spread to the United States. The Boston Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge was founded in 1829, and in 1831 sponsored the American Library of Useful Knowledge, the object of which was "to issue in a cheap form a series of works, partly original and partly selected, in all the most important branches of learning."<sup>2</sup>

C. S. Rafinesque, the botanist, anxious to diffuse knowledge and learning, began in 1832 the Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge. He believed that with sufficient support, he could issue good literature at a price the masses could afford to pay. The masses, however, did not respond and a year later Rafinesque was forced to give up his undertaking. Discouraged in his attempt to provide "science, truth, and original essays" to the people at a low price, he remarked bitterly that in the future he would cater to the learned and enlightened and would write chiefly for them.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Southern Literary Messenger, 10:137-51 (1844).

2. North American Review, 53:515-30 (1831).

3. Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge, vol. 1, no. 8 (1833).

The publishing firm of Harper & Brothers, seeking a wider distribution for their publications were more successful, and about 1830 succeeded in bringing down the price of reprints of English books from one dollar and fifty cents, and one dollar and seventy-five cents, to around one dollar. According to William Gilmore Simms prices shortly afterward rose to about their former level, though there was "an occasional fall at retail, from \$1.50 to 50 cents--but only when there was a prospect of struggle between two of the publishers for the foreign spoil."<sup>4</sup> The difference in price between American reprints of English novels and American novels at this time was seldom more than ten or twenty-five cents.

Various unsuccessful attempts were made during the following years to cheapen the price of books, one of the most notable of which was Carey's Library of Choice Literature, a good collection of books issued in weekly parts which could later be bound in individual volumes. Priced low enough at five dollars a year, or about ten cents a part, the postal charges practically doubled this cost to the consumer, and the Library was discontinued for lack of sufficient patronage in 1836, a little more than a year after its beginning.

The first great wave of cheap books, however, came in the early 1840's. This movement for cheap literature was started by Park Benjamin, an editor and poet of some fame at the time, who began in 1839 the literary newspaper Brother Jonathan, in which foreign novels were printed in continued form from week to week. Other such publications soon sprang up, and in 1842 Benjamin, then editor of the New World, began issuing complete books in paper covers, as quarto "Extras," offering books which formerly had been priced at from one to three dollars at new low prices ranging from six and one-fourth cents to twenty-five

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4. Southern Literary Messenger, 10:449-69 (1844).

cents.<sup>5</sup> The sale of these "Extras," most of which were foreign novels, was large for that time, twenty to thirty thousand copies of a title often being distributed by one publisher in two or three weeks.<sup>6</sup> The regular book publishers, led by the Harpers, soon lowered their own prices, and offered handier sized books at little more than the cost of the ungainly quartos. With such competition the popularity of the quartos waned and two or three years later they were discontinued.

Following the unsuccessful attempt of the literary newspapers to provide cheap literature, there was a gradual rise of book prices from the low level existing from 1842 to 1845. Between this time and the 1870's there were only a few attempts to publish good books at very low prices, none of which met with success.

The years from 1870 to 1891, with which this study is primarily concerned, represent a unique period in the history of publishing in the United States. During this period great quantities of books, mostly foreign fiction, were published in cheap editions at very low prices, generally without payment to the authors. The period so characterized closed in 1891 with the passage of the international copyright law: in this study the beginning of the period has been set, perhaps arbitrarily, at 1870, although the year 1877 marks the first great outburst of pirated<sup>7</sup> books. Unrestricted publication of cheap pirated books did not come about without a more or less gradual beginning, however, and it is for the purpose

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5. Southern Literary Messenger, 10:449-69 (1844).

6. New World, 5:334 (1842).

7. The term "pirate" is inexact, for since there was no provision in this country for the copyright of works by foreign authors, the publishers who appropriated their books without payment to the authors were breaking no law except possibly an ethical one.

of showing this development that the years immediately preceding 1877 are included in the following account.

After the period 1842-1845 there gradually grew up among publishers a gentlemen's agreement, known as "trade courtesy." The purpose of this agreement was to eliminate as far as possible the issuing of competing editions which in most cases, because of the lower price at which each succeeding edition was issued, and because of the smaller sale for each edition was likely to be without profit to any of the competing publishers. Under this agreement the publisher who first brought out a foreign author's book or signified his intention of doing so, was not bothered by a competing edition. If a publisher introduced a new author into this country, he was considered as having an informal option on his following works, though if the author turned out to be a very popular one, the publisher's rights were not always respected. Despite occasional lapses the system worked out pretty well all around; publishers were able to increase both the quality and the price of books by foreign authors, the authors received larger payments than they probably would have received without the system, and American authors were benefited since the price of foreign books and American books were kept more nearly at the same level. The public was offered better made books than would have been possible under a system of unrestricted reprinting, but at a considerably higher price. New books generally sold at from one dollar to one dollar and fifty cents, but the more popular older books such as those of Scott and Cooper could be had in satisfactory paper covered editions at twenty-five and fifty cents a volume. Under trade courtesy such publishing firms as Lippincotts, Harpers, and Appletons, were able to build lists of publications which were doubtless very tempting to adventurous printers or to young publishers trying to get a start.



As Henry Holt pointed out, this so-called "trade courtesy" was effective before the Civil War, largely because "the natural distribution of industries then prevented the undue crowding of labor and capital into manufacturing."<sup>8</sup> During the war there was an expansion of manufacturing, but this was confined mainly to matters connected with the war. The years following the war witnessed a further increase in manufacturing industries, which finally, seeking fields in which to work profitably, overflowed into the book publishing business. Without regard to "trade courtesy," and with little or no pay to foreign authors, books were manufactured in cheap form at low prices and distributed in large quantities throughout the country.

The purpose of this study is, first, to give a chronological account of cheap book publishing during the period from 1870 to 1891; and second, to present an account of some of the more important firms which were active in publishing cheap books during that period.

The term "cheap book" is used in this study, with the same meaning that it generally had in the trade and in the newspapers and magazines of the period; that is, a cheap book was, considering its character, conspicuously low in price in comparison with book prices in general. However, it does not include the so-called "Dime Novels," which although low in price, were seldom referred to in the trade as cheap books. The cheap book as it is here considered falls into two classes, the cloth bound book, and the book in paper covers, or as was the case with early issues of the cheap libraries, the book without a separate cover of any sort. For clearness and convenience, books not in cloth binding are in this study referred to as paper-covered books. These were the

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8. Forum, 5:27-46 (1888).

most widely distributed books of the time. Most of the paper-covered books considered as "cheap books" were novels by foreign authors, published in series called "libraries," at prices ranging from ten to twenty-five cents. They were also called reprints, but as a matter of fact many of them were actually first editions. In the latter part of the 1880's there came, finally, in paper-covered editions, novels written by American authors, priced at from twenty-five to fifty cents.

Most of the cheap cloth bound books were "cheap twelvemos" of works by popular standard authors. They ranged in price from twenty-five cents to about a dollar, and it was on this type of book that demoralizing price-cutting was most often practiced in this period.

The first step in assembling data consisted of reading through and taking notes from the files of the Publishers' Weekly from its beginning in 1872, until 1895. This preliminary work furnished, in addition to data directly concerned with cheap book publishing, a background of American publishing as a whole during the period. Search for material was then made in other magazines and in newspapers most likely to yield information on this subject, especially the American Bookseller and its predecessor the American Booksellers' Guide. The New York Tribune furnished some valuable material. The examination of many cheap books themselves, published in the period, furnished data not found elsewhere. Other works used will be found listed in the bibliography.

Most of the material for this study has been found in the University of Illinois Library, but it has been necessary to supplement this by visits to other libraries. In the summers of 1933 and 1934 the University of Chicago Library was visited, and the files of the American Bookseller were examined, as

well as some of the relatively scarce paper-covered books published during the period. In the summer of 1935 two weeks were spent at the Library of Congress reading articles in various magazines and newspapers, and examining the collection of cheap books issued in series, such as the Seaside Library and the Franklin Square Library. It is interesting to note that these books were kept in the rare book room.

The New York Public Library and the Newberry Library in Chicago, both of which were visited, supplied some material not elsewhere available.

The progress of this study was directed by Professor P. L. Windsor, Director of the University of Illinois Library School, whose criticism and friendly encouragement helped to solve many problems in connection with its organization and form.

Acknowledgement should be made to Mr. Downing P. O'Harra for his work entitled Book Publishing in the United States, 1860-1901, a thesis written at the University of Illinois in 1928 for the Master's Degree in Library Science. This thesis furnished the suggestion for the present investigation.

Ralph Adimari of Mount Vernon, New York, an authority on cheap book publishing, contributed several long letters containing information which has been very helpful. Letters from R. R. Donnelley, Frederic Melcher, and George T. Dunlap have been helpful. Mr. Adimari and Mr. Melcher generously read and criticized the greater part of the manuscript. Mr. V. Valta Parma, Curator of the Rare Book Room in the Library of Congress, gave valuable suggestions.





## CHAPTER I

### CHEAP BOOK PRODUCTION YEAR BY YEAR

1870-1891

"We have come to the end of another year of bookselling, and the lesson of the year, so far as we can judge, is that Americans want cheap books. The tendency of prices in all departments has been downward during the past two years, and the necessity of consulting the popular demand was never more apparent than at the present time."

American Booksellers' Guide, 4:8 (1873)

These words indicate the trend toward lowering book prices during the first years of the 1870's, a reaction to the higher prices of the war and post war period. It is probable that the low priced English books, sold in this country for less than American made books, influenced the trend toward a lowered price, for whereas prices in the United States, due to a general increase in production costs, had risen during the '60's, in England a cheap literature had been growing up. The price of books in this country during the 1860's did not increase, however, in proportion to the depreciation of the currency.<sup>1</sup> The Round Table stated in 1867 that "A cheapness of book-making which seems to us almost incredible is now established in England," and describes an English edition of the Waverley Novels selling in New York at twenty-five cents a volume,

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1. Publishers' Weekly, 8:709 (1875).

so excellent that if it had been made in this country, it could not be sold for less than seventy-five cents.<sup>2</sup> In 1872, the American Booksellers' Guide suggested that "It may be for the interest of the general public to get the cheap books which are now being imported in such profusion."<sup>3</sup> It should be pointed out that the English books here spoken of were not newly published books, but the "standards" on which the manufacturing cost was more nearly the real cost. New books were published in this country at a lower price than were new copyright books in England.<sup>4</sup>

As early as 1871, the New York Tribune reported that "the popular taste has tended to a cheaper class of books than before, and more volumes have been sold for the same money."<sup>5</sup> Two years later in July, 1873, the Tribune began to issue, in sheet form, their Tribune Extras, dealing mainly with scientific subjects. The Extras although they cannot be dignified with the name book, were important in pointing the way for the cheap "libraries," which shortly sprang up in profusion. Number one of the Extras was Tyndall on Light, in sheet form with twenty-three illustrations, and sold for five cents. Number two contained Beecher's Compulsory Education, number three Wilder's Brain and Mind, Barker's Spectroscope, and Young's Solar Physics. Number four contained Weiss's Shakespearean Studies, Seven Art Studies, Parton's Pilgrim Fathers, and Bret Harte's Argonauts. Most of the Extras were sold at five cents, some at ten or fifteen cents. The publishers reported that they had an extraordinary popularity during the first year, some fourteen numbers having been issued, and half a million copies sold.<sup>6</sup>

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2. Round Table, Jan. 12, 1867. Reprinted in American Literary Gazette, 8:192 (1867).

3. American Booksellers' Guide, 3:335 (1872).

4. Publishers' Weekly, 10:631 (1876).

5. New York Tribune, Jan. 6, 1871, p. 2.

6. American Bibliopolist, 6:8 (1874) Advertising section.

Perhaps more important were the Tribune Novels, or additional extra sheets, started in the same year, 1873. They were issued at irregular intervals; some were about the size of Harper's Weekly, quartos, and some were in octavo size. The single numbers sold at ten cents and the double numbers at twenty cents. Number two contained May by Margaret Oliphant, together with Bret Harte's An Episode of Fiddletown. Number three was Hardy's Pair of Blue Eyes, a single number, while number five, a double number contained his Far From the Madding Crowd. Other authors included were Blackmore and Walter Besant. In some cases there were "authorized" editions of the novels published by the Tribune, and in these cases arrangements were made with the publishers of these editions for the Tribune reprint. The Tribune Novels were published over a period of almost ten years, the last volume being issued in May, 1883, but they were published so infrequently that there were only twenty-six numbers in all. They were issued by the Tribune as a side line. It is possible that if more effort had been spent upon them they might have been more successful. The Tribune Novels were the lowest priced full-length novels of quality that had been published in this country since the days of Park Benjamin and the New World. An important factor in their low price was the fact that they were printed from plates that had been used in the columns of the New York Tribune. Full circulation statistics are not available, but being connected with a daily paper circulating as widely as the Tribune, they must have been distributed in considerable numbers. Today, however, they are so rare that, according to one authority, no copies of the Tribune Novels have been discovered.<sup>7</sup> The Tribune Novels, while not particularly successful, did give Donnelley,

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7. Ralph Adimari, "The House That Beadle Built," American Book Collector, 5:149 (1934).

Gasette & Lloyd the idea for their Lakeside Library, which in turn was largely responsible for the whole flood of "libraries" in 1877.

The price of paper was an important factor in the production of cheap books. Paper prices had sailed skyward during the Civil War period, but shortly after began a steady decline. Paper from ground wood pulp, first manufactured in this country in 1867, opened up a new source for paper, though it was not until several years later that paper from wood pulp came to be widely used. Together with wood pulp came faster methods of paper making. In 1871 straw paper for newspapers was selling at twelve cents a pound, and "fine book" at sixteen and seventeen cents. By 1875 news print was selling at nine cents, and "machine finish" book paper for ten to eleven cents. From this time until about 1895 there was a definite decline in prices. In 1889 calendared book paper sold for six and a half and seven and a half cents a pound, while news print sold at from three and a fourth cents upward.<sup>8</sup>

By 1875 the price of paper had been reduced to about what it was before the Civil War, while other expenses of publishing, as labor, rent, advertising, and distributing, had increased from fifty to two hundred per cent, so that a book which sold for one dollar and twenty-five cents before the war, sold in 1875 for one dollar and seventy-five cents to two dollars. Discounts to jobbers and dealers ranged from thirty-three and one-third per cent to forty-two per cent, and, said the New York Observer, "The retailer can sell from 20% to 30% and still make a living wage." The Publishers' Weekly was of the opinion, however, that a bookseller could not live on a margin as low as this.<sup>9</sup>

Following the example of the Extras published by the Tribune, Donnelley, Lloyd & Company, of Chicago,

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8. L. H. Weeks, A History of Paper Manufacturing in the United States, 1690-1916, p. 297.

9. Publishers' Weekly, 8:709 (1875).

began, in January, 1875, their series of cheap non-copyright quarto novels in paper, the Lakeside Library. The Lakeside Library was the real pioneer among cheap quarto libraries in this country. Prices for this series were determined according to the number of pages, a single issue being sold at ten cents, and if additional pages were required, the price was in proportion. A considerable number of the titles required double issues. It contained some of the best foreign novels, old and new, as well as some of the poorer works. The Lakeside Library did not achieve its widest circulation until a year or two later, but its cheap issues did seem to affect the prices of other books. Helen's Babies, published in 1876 at fifty cents, a lower price than usual for a new copyright book, achieved a wide circulation and books priced at fifty cents, led by the Lee & Shepard series, were astoundingly successful the following year.

The outstanding phenomenon in publishing during the year 1877, however, was the very general success suddenly attained in the reprinting of standard novels in ten cent quartos such as George Munro's Seaside Library, Norman Munro's Riverside Library, Donnelley & Lloyd's Lakeside Library, Frank Leslie's Home Library, and the Fireside Library published by Beadle and Adams. All of them contained "standard" fiction of Scott, Cooper, Dickens, etc., in addition to popular foreign novels of the day, and all were issued in single numbers at ten cents and double numbers at twenty cents, in accordance with the precedent set by the Tribune Novels.

For almost fifteen years this type of reprinting was destined to play an important part in influencing the course of publishing in the United States, and in consequence the reading of the people.

It should not be thought that the publishers of the ten cent paper-covered quartos (many of them were without even paper covers) were introducing a different kind of publication merely because the



quartos were paper books. Low-priced books had been issued in paper covers for many years, and were popular. Arguing in favor of paper books, August Brentano, Jr., said in 1876, "No matter how cheap the cloth edition of a book may be, in order for it to succeed (provided it is a novel) it must be issued in pamphlet form... As soon as a cloth novel is shown to a customer, and if he takes ever so great or little fancy to it, in two cases out of three the first question is 'Have you not got this in paper?' Then as for traveling, paper books always take the lead."<sup>10</sup> It was quite a common custom, especially in the case of novels, to publish both a cloth and a paper edition.

The important factor, then, in the success of the new quarto libraries was their extremely low price. It was not by accident that they appeared in quarto size, with two or three columns of closely printed type to the page. It was only because of these economies in manufacture that they could be issued at a profit. Other conditions which made a low price possible, were the absence of a copyright law, making payments to foreign authors unnecessary, the low rate of postage (two cents a pound), and an increase in the speed of manufacturing. Another, and perhaps even more important factor in the success of the libraries was that their publishers were able to reprint books for which the regular publishers had already created a demand. In this way they eliminated to a considerable extent that very important item in publishing--risk. They were in a position to choose those titles which were almost certain to find a ready sale. It was during these early years that the cheap book publisher George Munro was accumulating a fortune from his Seaside Library. When it became necessary to publish mostly new titles, and to assume the accompanying risks, profits on the cheap "library" publications rapidly declined.

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10. Publishers' Weekly, 10:632 (1876).

In September, 1877, the Publishers' Weekly listed fourteen of the newly arisen libraries, or series of broadsheets, noting that they were "For sale generally by news companies," and that one of them, the Lakeside, already contained more than a hundred numbers, while the Seaside was increasing at the regular rate of eight a week. They included many of the best novels and many of the best-selling ones. Many of the titles were taken from the Harper's Select Library, and some from the series published by Appletons, Lippincott, and Holt.<sup>11</sup> The sale of the cheap libraries was large, editions running from five to sixty thousand.<sup>12</sup> The Publishers' Weekly estimated that by October some two million five hundred thousand copies had been sold, and predicted that the market for them would soon be pretty well supplied.<sup>13</sup>

This sudden popularity had an almost immediate effect upon the prices of other books, especially of the low-priced non-copyright series of the regular publishers. Perhaps the most noticeable price change was that of the Harper's Library of Select Novels where reductions of twenty to forty per cent were made. The excellent Leisure Hour Series, in linen dusters, published by Henry Holt was reduced in October from one dollar and twenty-five cents to one dollar. According to the Publishers' Weekly,

"There is also a tendency to issue new books at a lower rate of pricing, which is certainly a healthful tendency, in accordance with the times; but the passion for large discounts is by no means eradicated, and books are still often published at a much higher price than the normal rate, simply to permit a large discount. This holds especially true in Juveniles."<sup>14</sup>

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11. Publishers' Weekly, 12:396-97 (1877).

12. Ibid., 18:304 (1880).

13. Ibid., 12:396-97 (1877).

14. Ibid., 12:247 (1877).

The large sale of the quarto publications lessened the market for books in specific series, issued by the regular publishers, although this was also due to the introduction at about this time, of other series, such as the one dollar No Name series of books by American authors published by Roberts Brothers, characterized by the Publishers' Weekly as being "well advertised, cheap, attractive, and popular."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Harper's Library of Select Novels, stimulated by reduced prices, increased its sales in spite of the direct competition of the cheap libraries. It was noted at this time, particularly in the case of George Eliot's Daniel Deronda "that the issue of novels in cheap shapes often has a wholesome influence on the sale of more costly editions, perhaps partly by the enterprise and comparative cheapening called forth by the competition."<sup>16</sup> Daniel Deronda was first published by Harpers and soon after appeared in the Lakeside Library, later in the Seaside and other cheap libraries.

Opinion was considerably divided as to what type of readers bought the new dime quartos. At first they were sold almost exclusively by news dealers, the profit of three cents a copy not being sufficient to induce most booksellers to offer them in possible competition with more profitable editions on their shelves, but before long they came to be more and more handled by the latter. The Publishers' Weekly, in 1877, was of the opinion that the quartos were bought largely by the readers of the weekly story papers, which had not been having as large a circulation as formerly, and that the new publications had also pretty nearly disposed of what remained of the dime novel business.<sup>17</sup> It was quite generally admitted, however, that there were also considerable sales for the broadsheets among the regular novel

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15. Publishers' Weekly, 12:396-97 (1877).

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

readers. In 1878, a correspondent in the Contributors Club of the Atlantic Monthly wrote that the broadsheets did not come into competition with bound books, but were largely bought by the former readers of the "Texas Jack" dime novel. "Bound books, or even the ordinary paper novels at fifty or seventy-five cents a copy, are absolutely beyond the means of these readers."<sup>18</sup>

The prediction was made, during the first year of the rise to popularity of the cheap libraries, that the outcome would be either that all the leading publishers would join in an effort to get an international copyright law, or that they would disregard the rights of foreign authors and go into broadsheet publishing themselves.<sup>19</sup>

In the summer of 1878, the firm of Harper & Brothers, disturbed by the discourteousness of the quarto "pirates," who continued to reprint large numbers of the Harper publications, and finding that these cheap books were coming more into competition with books bearing the Harper imprint, decided to carry the war into the enemy territory, acting on the theory that the best defense was a good offense. The result was the Franklin Square Library, a cheap series similar to Munro's Seaside.

The Franklin Square Library was the only quarto library published by a regular publisher, however, and it is doubtful that the Harper offensive harmed the library publishers to any great extent. Indeed, it was partly the name of Harper on the Franklin Square Library that gave to the quartos a certain dignity and introduced them to many new readers.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Atlantic Monthly, 42:370-71 (1878).

19. Publishers' Weekly, 12:396-97 (1877).

20. Ibid., 15:340-45 (1879).

## 1879

In 1879, John B. Alden, proprietor of the American Book Exchange, was the sensation of the publishing business with his very cheap reprints of standards, both fiction and non-fiction, which he published at new low prices, with postage added. Alden first carried on his business through the mails, avoiding the bookstores, and sold books in such large numbers that it looked as though bookselling might in the future be carried on in this manner. The retailer's business seemed to be slipping into the mail bag. But during the following year Alden found that the mail business was not sufficient to distribute his large output, and he sought the aid of the booksellers. However, the trouble with Alden's books was not that they were cheap, but that they were sold at less than the cost of production, and Alden soon became bankrupt.

The Seaside Library was the most flourishing of the cheap libraries by 1879, having absorbed or forced out of business most of the competing series, and was rivaled chiefly by the Franklin Square Library.

The year 1879 found paper at prices considerably below normal, and as printing prices were also lower, publishers vied with one another in producing low priced books.

## 1880

Early in 1880, paper prices advanced rather sharply, but the patents on the manufacture of wood-pulp paper were beginning to run out at that time, promising a plentiful supply of paper at low prices.<sup>21</sup>

In 1880, the Publishers' Weekly noted the small proportion of fiction issued by the regular publishers, both of American copyrighted fiction as well as foreign fiction, because of the competition

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21. Publishers' Weekly, 17:195-96 (1880).

of the cheap libraries. George Haven Putnam, a champion of copyright, wrote at this time, "These pamphlet series have, however, done a most important service in pointing out the absurdity of the present condition of literary property, and in emphasizing the needs of an international copyright law."<sup>22</sup> It was becoming impossible to publish profitably a copyright novel unless it would command a ready sale. Less popular novels could only be sold at higher prices in limited editions. The influence of the cheap libraries was being felt on books of other classes also, as they were beginning to reprint works other than fiction. The Canadian Bystander stated that Canada was being flooded, not only with novels "but solid works of history, biography, criticism, science, philosophy, theology" in the form of broadsheets.<sup>23</sup> Among the works added to the cheap libraries during the year were J. C. Geikie's Christ, Thomas Hughes' Manliness of Christ, and Arnold's Light of Asia, which had originally been published by Dutton, Houghton & Osgood, and Roberts Brothers, respectively. Isaac K. Funk, a new entry in the cheap library field, was the chief cause of concern for publishers of books of non-fiction. Contending that the novels being published in the cheap libraries were of a bad character, he undertook the task of improving conditions by publishing books of a more elevating character in his quarto Standard Series, including such works as Macaulay's and Carlyle's Essays, Spurgeon's John Ploughman's Talk, Knight's History of England, etc. The Standard Series sold at ten to twenty cents an issue.

As it has been pointed out, the low prices of the cheap libraries made publication of American books, on which royalty was paid, very difficult. On the other hand, as competition among foreign works continued to increase, a number of publishers began

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22. Publishers' Weekly, 15:350-52 (1879).

23. Bystander, 2:518-20 (1880).



to pay more attention to American books, where they at least did not have to meet the competition of the libraries and other cheap editions.<sup>24</sup> Before the cheap libraries became popular American publishers as a class were opposed to an international copyright, but as competition in the reprinting business became stronger, their attitude toward international copyright became more favorable. By 1880, most of the regular publishers were either indifferent on the subject, or were willing to have a copyright law passed.<sup>25</sup>

## 1881

In 1881 the Publishers' Weekly included for the first time, the more popular of the cheap libraries in its annual summary. In 1880 the Weekly had listed two hundred and ninety-two books of fiction, but in 1881 the number had risen to five hundred and eighty-seven. The increase was chiefly due to the inclusion of the cheap libraries.<sup>26</sup>

## 1882

While the sale of the library quartos continued to be large, readers were unmistakably tiring of their unhandy size, as they had tired of the quarto New World almost forty years before. To some it seemed that the cheap libraries were on their last legs. Said the Publishers' Weekly, "It is now obvious that the cheap era has come to an end. Hereafter, books will be published as of yore, at a price which will give a fair profit to the publisher and leave something for the author."<sup>27</sup> This hopeful prediction was not to be realized for several years, however.

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24. Critic, 1:80 (1881).

25. Philadelphia North American, Oct. 7, 1880. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 18:488-89 (1880).

26. Publishers' Weekly, 21:77 (1882).

27. Hour, 1882. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 21:311 (1882).

• To meet the demand for handy-sized books at a low price firms such as Belford, Clarke & Company, Pollard, Moss & Company, and others, began to publish in increasingly large numbers cheap cloth-bound books known at that time as cheap twelvemos. These were not to reach their greatest popularity until the latter part of the 1880's, however. In the meantime John W. Lovell started a new wave of popularity for the cheap libraries when, in April, 1882, he began the publication of Lovell's Library, a series of ten and twenty cent volumes on the same general plan as the Seaside Library but in a handy twelvemo size. The first two numbers of Lovell's Library were Longfellow's Hyperion, and Outre Mer. The numbers that followed in rapid succession were mostly standard and popular fiction with a sprinkling of books in other classifications.

The other cheap libraries were forced to follow the example of Lovell and change to the smaller sized page. They did this with reluctance, however, for the quartos could be manufactured for less than the twelvemos and the margin of profit, small on the quartos, dwindled dangerously with the twelvemos. George Munro held out for the quartos almost a year and a half, and the Harpers several years longer.

By 1882, the New York Sun could ask, "and among cheap trash, where is the dime novel?" and then go on to point out that the cheap libraries had done a great deal toward distributing good literature and improving the taste of readers. "There can be no doubt that there is a healthier tone in the demand today than ever before." Most of the cheap books were English and French, and while people were tiring of them and wanted American works, they could not afford to buy cloth books.<sup>28</sup>

The Boston Globe thought that "This question of cheap literature is one of the most important of

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28. New York Sun. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 22:142 (1882).

the time," and that, "The extent to which the Seaside, the Franklin Square and other popular series are steeping our people in English thoughts...is considered with apprehension in many quarters."<sup>29</sup> A group of Boston authors were alarmed to the extent of sending their remonstrances to Congress. It was hoped that American books could be published in somewhat the same form as the cheap libraries, but the financial difficulties were too great for the success of any except the most popular authors at such a low price. Dodd, Mead & Company were the most successful with cheap quarto editions, and their success was due to the fact that they published in this form only the immensely popular novels of the Reverend E. P. Roe. In the spring of 1882 they announced a limited quarto edition of a hundred thousand copies of his Barriers Burned Away, at twenty cents a copy. By May almost seventy thousand copies had been subscribed for before the publication date. It should be pointed out that this was not a new Roe novel, but had been published more than ten years previously at a dollar and a half, and had paid both the author and publisher well for many years. This cheap edition did not harm the sale of the regular edition, and several other of Roe's novels were published in cheap form during the next few years, all of which had a good sale.

Not long after the Dodd, Mead experiment mentioned above, Putnams issued the popular Leavenworth Case by Anna Katherine Green, in a cheap quarto edition at twenty cents. This too had a large sale, and Putnams continued to publish quarto editions of this author's novels, in addition to the fifty cent and dollar editions in sixteenmo size.

The American Bookseller stated in 1882 that "notwithstanding the vast quantity of the best literature which is sent out every day in the cheap and handy form of the 'Libraries,'...books in the old-fashioned substantial form are not by any means going out of fashion."<sup>30</sup> Later in the same year the American

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29. Boston Globe, April 27, 1883. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 23:522 (1883).

30. American Bookseller, 13:28 (1882).

Bookseller said that, "Comparing the prices of books today with those of a dozen, or even twenty years ago, one finds that they have become less costly."<sup>31</sup>

In 1882 cylinder presses were first installed in the press rooms of the United States, greatly increasing printing speed.

## 1883

By 1883 there were at least six libraries in which twenty cents was the highest price charged at retail for any book, except for extra long works such as Eugene Sue's Wandering Jew. At that time more than half of the cheap reprints had been sold at ten cents a copy. "Form not the most pleasing, type is small, but form, paper, and typography are fully as good as the American newspaper. At such prices the poorest can afford to read, and among the two thousand or more volumes already issued in very cheap form he can find, if not everything he wants, at least a great deal that pleases him. Instead of subscribing to a public library...he can for the same amount of money per year buy outright twenty or thirty books. A volume of Carlyle can be bought for the price of a glass of whiskey, Emerson is as costly as a pint bottle of champagne."<sup>32</sup> The Hour was of the opinion that the increase in the number of books published in the United States during the five years previous to 1883 was the "most significant fact in the history of printed literature," an overstatement but nevertheless interesting. The reason for the increase was, as the Hour pointed out, that "every well-known English book that, after the flush of first publication here, sold at the rate of a few hundred copies per year has been republished and sold by tens of thousands. Dickens, Carlyle, Thackeray,

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31. American Bookseller, 13:684 (1882).

32. Hour, April 21, 1883. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 23:498-99 (1883).

George Eliot, Ainsworth, Dumas, Miss Mulock, Macaulay, Tyndall, Tennyson, Browning--the strong and the weak, light and heavy, historians, essayists, novelists, poets, have found a new set of readers."<sup>33</sup>

In the spring of 1883 Henry Holt introduced his new Leisure Moment Series, a collection of admirably edited and well-made paper-covered books, mostly novels, in handy size priced at from twenty to thirty-five cents. Among the volumes added to the series were novels by Hardy, Turgenev, and Stevenson.

Toward the latter part of 1883 there were unmistakable indications that the day of the cheap quartos was nearing its close. The American News Company, distributors of most of the quarto libraries, shortly before the end of the year returned to the publisher one million two hundred thousand copies of the Seaside Library, which had been on sale by dealers throughout the country.<sup>34</sup> Readers were becoming tired of the quartos and demanded instead the new duodecimo editions. George Munro, who had hitherto published only quartos in the Seaside, was forced to change in the latter part of 1883 to the handier size, much as he disliked to do so, for as the Literary World pointed out "in the making of books of this character there is no money to be made by the publisher."<sup>35</sup> However, despite the popularity of the pocket-sized libraries, the quartos did continue to sell for several years, though in reduced numbers.

In this year the Hon. Abel Goddard, member of the New York Assembly from St. Lawrence, made a bid for immortality by introducing into that body a bill of which the following is the chief part: "Any person who shall sell, loan or give to any minor under 16 years of age any dime novel or book of fiction, without first obtaining the written consent of the parent

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33. Hour, 1882. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 21:311 (1882).

34. Boston Advertiser. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 25:208 (1884).

35. Literary World, 15:40-41 (1884).

or guardian of such minor, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment or by a fine not exceeding \$50."<sup>36</sup>

## 1884

The number of cheap publications increased greatly during 1884. This increase was due in part to the activities of Belford, Clarke & Company, and of Norman L. Munro. The former firm published large quantities of twelvemos which they distributed over the country by methods considered by many to be unethical. Norman L. Munro, formerly publisher of the Riverside Library, began a new cheap collection, the Munro Library, in handy pocket-size, to which he added some two hundred and sixty-six volumes during the year. He was outdone by his brother George, however, who issued four hundred and forty-nine volumes, more than two hundred and fifty of them being in the pocket edition of the Seaside Library. In March, 1884, the New York Tribune reported that the margin of profit on cheap books had grown smaller and more uncertain, and the number of houses increased until at that time the business seemed to be virtually blocked. "Certain kinds of cheap reprints have become absolutely unsaleable, because no sooner has one publisher placed them on the market than a rival has issued the same books in a little more popular shape, and this competing enterprise has been destroyed by the third."<sup>37</sup> The Publishers' Weekly observed in the same vein that the cheap reprints had become a drug on the market.<sup>38</sup> George Munro, the king of the re-printers, finding that there was no profit in the paper duodecimos he had lately been forced to publish, stated in effect that he could see an

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36. Publishers' Weekly, 23:500 (1883).

37. New York Tribune, 1884. Reprinted in American Bookseller, 15:189 (1884).

38. Publishers' Weekly, 25:260 (1884).

international copyright law just around the corner, and that he would welcome it.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these trying conditions, the cheap reprinters, or "pirates" as they were commonly called were exceedingly anxious that all attempts to pass an international copyright law be blocked. They circulated a broadside in which the prices of certain English books were given, together with the prices of the cheap American editions, indicating that with a copyright law in effect the English publishers would force high-priced books on the American people. Books having the greatest difference in price were listed, such as Martin's Life of Prince Albert, the English price being twenty-two dollars and fifty cents, while the cheapest American edition was only forty cents.<sup>40</sup> The English edition of McCarthy's History of Our Own Times was twelve dollars, the cheap American edition forty cents. No mention was made of the very considerable number of low-priced books which were being published in England. Actually, as was pointed out on several occasions, English books with the exception of the three volume novel were not much higher than books of the same quality in this country. In some cases the English edition was cheaper. In England a "standard" at half a crown (62¢) corresponded to the dollar standard in the United States, while the six penny quartos imitating our cheap libraries "gave a good deal more for the money than the 10 and 15 ct. Seaside and Franklin Square books."<sup>41</sup> The American cheap libraries contained a greater number of titles, however, than were published in the English six-penny editions, and had the advantage of being able to use the newest English works without payment of royalties.

Whatever the real truth of the matter, there is no doubt that the cheap book argument was an

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39. New York Tribune, Feb. 14, 1884. p. 2.

40. Publishers' Weekly, 25:298 (1884).

41. Ibid., p. 349, 379.



effective one against the copyright. Mr. Isaac K. Funk, a supporter of international copyright, testified that "The feeling that a copyright bill would hinder the diffusion of intelligence has weighed against the passage of such a measure a hundredfold more than the much talked of opposition of the publishers."<sup>42</sup>

One American author in 1883 gave as his reason for not being in favor of an international copyright law that he could save more money by buying the cheap paper-covered library books than he could make by the foreign sales of his books.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the period during which the cheap libraries played an important part in book production and distribution, there was considerable difference of opinion as to what extent they were handled in bookstores. One bookseller cited a case in which Appletons published a book not knowing that it had appeared some fourteen months earlier in the Seaside Library. The Appleton edition, nevertheless, had a very fine sale. According to this bookseller here was proof that there were two classes of readers, "those who read the Seaside Library, and those who do not," and adds "My point is this--the booksellers don't keep the 'libraries.' They can't--there is no profit in them, and they spoil on the shelves. Therefore to all the people who frequent book stores the 'libraries' are non-existent. Personally I don't know what they contain. A few Franklin Squares I have, but no others, and I sell very few of them, though they are near the door. The people who buy the 'libraries' are the people who take in the New York Ledger--utterly unknown to bookstores...Harpers, by putting their best books in the Franklin Square Library, are not doing themselves justice, and the

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42. Letter to New York Tribune. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly 25:272-73 (1884).

43. Publishers' Weekly, 25:302 (1884).

trade is starved by the reduction of the volume of business."<sup>44</sup> The writer says that the cheap libraries were sold by news dealers.

An editorial note to this letter pointed out that the bookseller did not appreciate the extent to which the cheap issues were handled by the regular bookstores. The following week another bookseller wrote that he had found through years of experience that the cheap libraries did sell in bookstores, "and are sought by the best class of people."<sup>45</sup> He had also found that with more expensive editions he must allow a twenty per cent discount, while the paper books could be sold at their full price.

William Dean Howells, no doubt smarting from the inroads the sale of low-priced foreign fiction had made on the sale of novels by American authors, has one of the characters in "The rise of Silas Lapham," copyrighted in 1884, remark, "I dare say they never buy a new book. I've met some of these moneyed people lately, and they lavish on every conceivable luxury, and then borrow books, and get them in the cheap paper editions."<sup>46</sup>

During 1884 the publishers of cheap libraries of the Seaside variety, who had formerly been content to find their material for the most part in fiction, sought to create a wider market. They invaded the more serious lines of reading matter and issued representative works in biography, poetry, history, travel, and literary history.<sup>47</sup> This was due to the increasingly strong competition that had been growing among the cheap libraries. Realizing that the fiction market was flooded, the publishers of the libraries sought to give new life to their publication lists and to create a wider market with the more serious works. Then, too, most of the libraries

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44. Publishers' Weekly, 26:643 (1884).

45. Ibid., 26:668 (1884).

46. Howells, W. D., Rise of Silas Lapham. Boston, 1885, p.139.

47. Publishers' Weekly, 27:93 (1885).

were being issued in the smaller and handier sizes that gave an impression of permanency more than did the old quartos, and offered a good field for experimentation.

It was pointed out in 1884 that "In the rage for cheapness we have sacrificed everything for slop, and a dainty bit of bookmaking is like a jewel in the swines' snout."<sup>48</sup>

## 1885

The cheap cloth-bound twelvemos, mainly of standards, continued to be published in increasingly large numbers. In March, 1885, Belford, Clarke & Company, one of the largest producers of this type of book, announced that they would manufacture two million volumes during the year.<sup>49</sup> These cheap twelvemos, commonly published at about a dollar a volume, were in actual practice sold in the dry-goods stores for as little as twenty-five cents, so that the published price was actually a fictitious one.<sup>50</sup> The Belford, Clarke twelvemos, while not good examples of bookmaking, were not the poorest of their kind, and were in fact superior to the ones issued by such firms as F. M. Lupton, Hurst & Company, W. L. Allison, and others. Whatever might be said of the cheap paper and poor typography of most of the paper-covered libraries, it is apparent that they did not pretend to be something they were not. The cheap twelvemos, however, were bound in cloth greatly superior to the wood pulp, clay and straw paper on which they were printed, and were thus bound in order to deceive the unpracticed book buyer. A. C. McClurg in an article in the Dial for May 1885, wrote,

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48. Publishers' Weekly, 25:151 (1884).

49. American Bookseller, 17:168 (1885).

50. Publishers' Weekly, 28:343 (1885).

"What shocking cruelties and barbarities have been committed in the name of cheapness on the innocent works of Scott and Dickens, of Thackeray and Macaulay! The unprotected classic is the fairest game. Here you will find the biggish book, with thick and dingy paper, and bad printing and binding--such as will fill out your shelves at a few cents a volume. Better the 'Franklin Squares' and the 'Seasides' than the 'pirates' twelvemos."<sup>51</sup>

The Western Bookseller continues the attack on the twelvemos, saying that,

"a number of manufacturers have sprung up, who from worthless or incomplete old plates, or from equally valueless new ones swarming with typographical errors and more serious errors, make books by the ton, as they would bricks by the thousand...so much printed matter in book form and in showy binding to catch the dimes of the unwary and unsophisticated buyers."<sup>52</sup>

In the spring of 1885 was formed in Boston the Aldine publishing company of which Dana Estes was one of the moving spirits. The purpose of this firm, it was announced, was to make war upon those publishers such as Belford, Clarke & Company, who issued books at exorbitant nominal retail prices, and after having supplied the trade distributed great quantities of their books over the country at reduced prices.<sup>53</sup> The Aldine company issued fiction in paper-covered octavos at thirty cents a volume, which they advertised as being "honestly made cheap editions." Included in their list were novels by Gaboriau, Mrs. Oliphant, and Whyte-Melville.

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51. Dial, 6:8-10 (1885).

52. Western Bookseller, March, 1885, p. 195.

53. Ibid., June, 1885, p. 275.

In connection with selling books at reduced prices the American Bookmaker pointed out that "The introduction of great bazaars, like that of Macy or Ehrich's, in New York, or Wechsler & Abraham, in Brooklyn, is doing much to damage printers, binders and booksellers." This was because of the practice of cutting prices on books, most of the ones they handled being "in cheap but attractive binding, paper and presswork cut down."<sup>54</sup>

The cheap libraries continued to grow rapidly, the Publishers' Weekly's annual record showing that of the four thousand and thirty books published during 1885, six hundred and twenty-four were issues of the better class of libraries, while there were almost half as many more, or about three hundred, added to the less important ones.<sup>55</sup> The complete list of additions as recorded by the American Bookseller, however, which catered largely to the news stand type of publication, showed that in all there were almost fifteen hundred volumes added to the cheap series during the year. A large proportion of the titles were fiction, although there were some in almost all of the other classes.

The publishers of the cheap libraries, but especially the American News Company, which distributed most of them, gained by the reduction in postal rates on this type of publication in 1885. The rate had been two cents a pound, but on July 1, it was lowered to one cent a pound, giving additional advantage to paper over cloth-bound books, on which the postage was eight cents a pound. The lowering of the rates influenced some of the regular publishers to issue paper books in series.<sup>56</sup>

It was becoming increasingly difficult at this time for publishers to issue anything but cheap editions of foreign works, especially of fiction. The Paper Mill reported that,

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54. American Bookmaker, 1:149 (1885).

55. Publishers' Weekly, 29:128 (1886).

56. Ibid., 27:711 (1885).

"The cheap reprints have stopped the growth of the old style of bookmaking, and consequently the growth of the manufacture of the kind of paper used in the old style books. Paper-covered editions, that can be sold for one-sixth or one-tenth the price of the ordinary cloth-bound books, are all the rage. Publishers say that it is no longer worth while reprinting an English book, no matter how popular it is. They are compelled to confine themselves outside of the paper-covered editions, to American copyrighted works and these, as matters now stand, have but little sale...The paper manufacturers [best customers] for fine book paper now are the dealers who supply the large printing houses and periodical publishers." 57

During the year 1885 there was a noticeable improvement in the appearance of paper covered books, and the quartos continued to be replaced by more attractive twelvemos or sixteenmos. The improvement in paper books was brought about partly by the example set in the new Riverside Paper Series, of American copyrighted works published by Houghton, Mifflin & Company weekly from June through August. While paper books were at that time popular the year around, they were especially well thought of during the summer months. Being light in weight they were deemed more comfortable, and more conveniently handled during the warm summer weather than cloth bound books, and could easily be slipped into a satchel if one was to travel. The Riverside Paper Series was well and attractively made, containing such titles as Holmes' Elsie Venner, and Howells' A Wedding Journey. Being copyrighted they were necessarily higher in price than such a series as the Seaside,

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57. Paper Mill, 1885. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 27:210 (1885).

but the fifty cents a volume at which they sold was considered moderate.

The firm of D. Appleton & Company which had almost from its beginning published a number of paper books at low prices, was also active during the year with paper editions of American copyright works at twenty-five and fifty cents. They advertised their twenty-five cent novels to the booktrade to a greater extent than had ever been done for books published at so low a price, and during the summer they used on several occasions a full page of the Publishers' Weekly to advertise a single twenty-five cent book. These were mostly anonymous works, novels by well known authors were priced at fifty cents.

John B. Alden of "Revolution" fame was again gaining attention with his cheap editions of good books, and his program of net prices. His edition of Ruskin was considered a marvel of cheapness and called forth a cheap edition from the firm of John Wiley.<sup>58</sup>

## 1886

Competition among the publishers of cheap libraries continued unabated during 1886 and even increased in savageness. Improved mechanical equipment offered explanation for reduction of costs and an excuse for price-cutting. There were at that time three cheap library publishers in whose establishments an entire book could be produced by machinery, including typesetting, printing and binding. These "sawmills" as they were called turned out their poorly made books with amazing rapidity. Comparatively little time was spent in proof reading and correction for that was an expensive process. An average novel could be manufactured complete in ten hours if necessary. These rapid manufacturing methods tempted the publishers to a large overproduction, and almost any foreign novel, regardless of whether it showed signs

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58. Publishers' Weekly, 27:582 (1885).



of reasonable success, was rushed into print by from three to six of them. The books were then sent to retailers with the understanding that any unsold copies could be returned, so that they were the property of the publisher during the six months they were left on sale. Unsold copies were returned in large numbers. A member of one of the cheap library firms stated that during the year not more than one book in twenty repaid the cost of issue, and that even when a book did achieve popularity the profit was divided among publishers of several different editions.<sup>59</sup> Attempts were made to organize the publishers in such a way that the foreign novels could be distributed among the different libraries, somewhat as the regular publishers had divided among themselves the foreign books before the coming of the cheap libraries. These efforts, however, were unsuccessful. The Literary World reported in May 1886, that "By the direct testimony of the firms engaged in publishing the better class of cheap ten-cent 'libraries,' there is no profit in the 'cheap literature' enterprises, and the question is being agitated whether it would not be worth while to raise the grade of the bookmaking, and the prices accordingly."<sup>60</sup> During 1886 there were issued in twenty-six libraries no fewer than fifteen hundred and fifty-one volumes.<sup>61</sup> Of this immense total, however, almost a third, or five hundred and eight volumes were issues of the dime novel class and were devoted to "blood and thunder" or "Injun fighting" stories by native authors. Of the better issues, those which before the development of the libraries would probably have been added to the lists of the regular publishers, there were at least six hundred volumes. Despite the interest shown in other works the

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59. Albany Journal, 1886. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 30:555-56 (1886).

60. Literary World, 17:150 (1886).

61. American Bookseller, 21:54 (1887).

libraries were composed mainly of fiction and of the total number of books added during the year all but sixty-nine were fiction. Of the fifty-four numbers added to the Franklin Square Library, only one of which was by an American, forty-six were fiction. In the Harper's Handy Series there was about the same percentage of fiction. Of the twenty-six libraries listed by the American Bookseller the prices ranged from five cents to twenty-five cents, and, said the editor, "at the latter the reader can obtain the last great success of the last popular English novelist; at the former he can procure the highly spiced adventures of thieves and detectives, cowboys and redskins."<sup>62</sup>

Conflicting opinions concerning the advisability of publishing books by American authors, were common during the period of the reign of the cheap libraries. On the one hand publishers stated that they were unable to issue American books because of the overwhelming competition offered by the reprints of foreign works, particularly of the novel. Other publishers, however, indicated that they could not afford to issue foreign books in good editions because of this same competition, but were forced to rely on copyrighted American books. The Critic's Lounger reported that one publisher had remarked "rather gleefully" that he had in press five American novels, and that the same condition had been noted among other publishers. The reason given was that it did not pay to publish foreign novels.<sup>63</sup> In June 1886, a writer in the Hour stated that the cheap libraries, by printing in a poor fashion all the new and old books that people would read, had frightened the publishers from adding to their lists anything but books by well known and popular American authors, and that authors were forced to have their writings first issued in magazines, "for the sale in book

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<sup>62</sup>. American Bookseller, 21:54 (1887).

<sup>63</sup>. Critic, 7:247 (1885).

form will scarcely pay the board bill of the author for the time he was engaged upon his manuscript."<sup>64</sup> Before the coming of the cheap reprints a popular novel sold from twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand copies, but in competition with the reprints only about five thousand copies could be sold.<sup>65</sup>

With the publishers of the better class of cheap libraries reporting little or no profit on most of their issues, with the competition of the libraries greatly reducing the sale and number of books published by the regular publishers, and consequently the income of authors, it would seem that the readers were the only class benefited. As Charles Dudley Warner remarked, "For the price of a box of strawberries or a banana you can buy the immortal works of the greatest genius of all time in fiction, poetry, philosophy, or science."<sup>66</sup> In his opinion the people who bought the cheap editions were generally those who could afford and did buy better editions.

That the libraries and other cheap reprints were widely distributed throughout the country several have testified. An observing English traveler in the United States wrote to the London Publishers' Circular, in 1886,

"I traveled far in America, and I was not very much surprised to notice that, in every hotel where they kept a bookstall, as is frequently the case, in every railroad car, at every book station from New York to Niagara, Chicago, St. Paul, and thousands of miles further in that great country, the chief books offered for sale were the cheap reprints of English authors. I found this to be the case in the great foreign, cattle and mining centers of the West, in such places as Minneapolis, Helena, Butte, Cheyenne, Omaha, etc. In

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64. Hour, 1886. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 30:16 (1886).

65. Critic, 7:247 (1885).

66. Harper's Magazine, 73:807 (1886).

Salt Lake City the interest, perhaps, was about equally divided between English and Mormon authors. But otherwise American authors seemed to be almost nowhere."<sup>67</sup>

One of the arguments used by the cheap book publishers against international copyright and the consequent destruction of pirated cheap books, was that it would throw out of work a large number of men who were engaged in setting type for the pirated books. In answer to this argument it was pointed out that "The amount of type-setting involved is exaggerated--it is probably less than two or three of our daily papers together, and is largely the cheap work of women or machines."<sup>68</sup> James Russell Lowell said at this time that he was unable to read some of the cheap and badly printed books for an hour. He was not in favor of cheap poorly printed books "because we should soon be suffering from it with our eyes as a nation, as the Germans have been suffering from their obstinacy in still using the German type." Lowell thought that an international copyright law would raise the standard of literary taste in America.<sup>69</sup>

An important new series of low priced classics, the Cassell's National Library began publication on January 20, 1886. Although these admirable little books were published originally by Cassell in London, they were distributed widely in this country, and bearing as they do, the imprint of the American branch of Cassell, they seem to deserve mention. Selling in England at three pence a volume, and in this country at ten cents a volume or fifty-two weekly issues postpaid for five dollars, they were cheaper and of better quality than any such series originated in this country.

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67. Publishers' Circular. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 29:22-23 (1886).

68. Publishers' Weekly, 29:334 (1886).

69. Ibid., p. 230-31.

Among the cheap cloth-bound twelvemos the Alta edition of popular standards, published by Porter & Coates, achieved a great popularity during this year. Better made books than most of the cheap twelvemos, they were thought to be "really wonders of cheapness, being sold at wholesale at a price which enables them to be retailed at from thirty-five cents up."<sup>70</sup> After counting up the Alta edition sales for the first part of the year on the one hundred and one volumes in the series, Porter & Coates were confident that they would sell over a million copies during the year.<sup>71</sup>

1887

The Publishers' Weekly had almost from the very beginning of the publication of cheap libraries contended that the regular publishers had it in their power to head off the pirates by issuing well-made books at the lowest possible price, instead of at an artificial price which allowed for discounts to the retail purchaser. The Weekly was pleased to note in 1887 that the regular publishers had at last got on the right track and that "It is gratifying to note that, so shortly after the discussion of the decline of the ugly quarto reprints and their equally objectionable paperbound sixteenmo progeny, a reaction has begun in the right direction and that at last there appears on the horizon of readers the forerunner of honestly-made and cheap literature." The books referred to included new Harper novels such as Thomas Hardy's Woodlanders, that were at seventy-five cents "Handy in shape; set in readable type, carefully printed on substantial white paper, with black not muddy ink--and, above all, daintily bound in cloth with paper sides, these are books that are not only an intellectual feast, but decidedly pleasing to the eye. Books that can and will be preserved,

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70. Publishers' Weekly, 30:240-41 (1886).

71. American Bookmaker, 3:52 (1886).

and that will have more influence in cultivating a taste for good literature than a whole year's issue of the so-called 'cheap' literature."<sup>72</sup> The Weekly also praised the half bound novels issued by J. B. Lippincott, and the neat fifty cent paper covered editions published by Appletons and Scribners.

Although this tendency toward well-made books at moderate prices continued to grow, the cheap libraries and cheap twelvemos glutted the market for several more years. Henry Holt estimated that since the coming of the cheap libraries and other pirated foreign works the sale of books by American authors had fallen off about two-thirds. Most people, according to Mr. Holt, instead of buying bound books, "now procure some of the cheap series, which are usually worn out by a single reading."<sup>73</sup>

The pirated foreign books were also popular outside of the United States; in Jamaica the booksellers, according to report, sold American editions of English books, such as the cheap issues of Harpers, Munro, Lovell, and Ogilvie. "These are stacked high on the counters of the Kingston booksellers, and the extent to which they are sold may be imagined from the fact that one firm could afford to insert an advertisement half a column long in all the local newspapers of a pirated American edition of 'She,' which they offered at a shilling a copy." They sold English editions of American books as well, thus completely avoiding the payment of royalties to authors.<sup>74</sup>

Mr. W. H. Rideing wrote in 1887 that the only plentiful thing was the pirated novel, and this, "like a rank weed in a garden, is surely choking all fiction of native growth." He tells of a sign in a large dry good house in New York offering all twenty-five cent editions at seven cents. "That is to say,

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72. Publishers' Weekly, 31:581. (1887).

73. New York Tribune, Nov. 13, 1887, p. 4.

74. Critic, 10:256 (1887).

a novel by Miss Braddon, Wilkie Collins, or any of the English novelists, making three or four hundred pages in twelvemo form, which until recently was thought to be a miracle of cheapness at twenty-five cents.... How can the books be manufactured at the price?.... The competition among the pirates is closer than ever, and they are forced by it into many concessions, which formerly they would not have considered for a moment." The books the publishers placed with the booksellers were returnable, and soiled copies were returned in large quantities. "Rather than sell them for waste paper,...the publisher then takes the lot to some dry goods house, and offers to put new covers on them with the imprint of the purchasers, if the latter will buy a certain number of thousands at five cents a copy. It is thus that they can be sold with flannel, laces, underwear and scented soap, for seven cents a copy."<sup>75</sup>

Charles Scribner, speaking of paper-covered books at from ten to fifty cents, said that they were distributed by the news companies, and that neither the American, the Union, which supplied trains exclusively, the Manhattan, the New England, nor any of the other companies, would handle them at less than fifty per cent discount. "Being received on sale, many of these volumes are returned soiled, and thus rendered almost valueless." Comparing the price of books in 1887 with the price before unrestricted piracy began, Mr. Scribner said that, "There was a time when a \$1 book was considered a cheap affair."<sup>76</sup>

That good literature was obtainable during this period at extremely low prices was attested to by the senior class in English at the University of California. In 1887 the class prepared a list of fifty of the best books of the world as published in cheap editions, and found that none of them cost more than thirty cents, while all fifty could be bought for nine dollars and twenty-two cents.<sup>77</sup>

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75. Critic, 11:56 (1887).

76. New York Tribune, March 27, 1887, p. 10.

77. Public Opinion, 2:583 (1887).



Following the example set by Houghton, Mifflin in 1886, Ticknor & Company began in May of 1887 the weekly publication of a series of fifty cent paper-covered American novels for summer reading, the Ticknor Paper Series. Later they were issued semi-monthly at a yearly subscription rate of twelve dollars. Included in the series were new books, as well as books which had been successful in higher priced editions. This well-made series of books, containing titles by such authors as William Dean Howells, E. W. Howe, Edward Bellamy, Henry James, and Joel Chandler Harris, became very popular and many of them "went into editions of 8 and 9,000 copies in a few months." The success of this series brought forth the comment from the Publishers' Weekly that "Cheapness only does not always create a profitable demand."<sup>78</sup>

For several years the Publishers' Weekly had been of the opinion that the quarto paper books were on their last legs and were about to disappear, but they managed to hang on for a longer time than was expected. The year 1887, however, marked their definite fading out. George Munro, the leader in cheap book publishing, finished out his quarto Seaside Library, in 1886, and from 1887 on added only to his pocket Seaside. Harpers were the last to give up the quartos, continuing their quarto Franklin Square Library to the end of the year 1887. Even though new quarto volumes were not added to the libraries after this date, there was a limited sale for them for several years, and the Harper catalog listed the six hundred and fifteen quarto volumes of the Franklin Square Library until 1898.

The trend of taste in book make-up at this time is indicated by the following extract from an article on cheap books in the American Bookmaker for July, 1887,

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78. Publishers' Weekly, 33:315-16 (1888).

"These are the golden days of the paper cover, the limp leather, the flexible cloth, the 'pocketbook' form and the tuck attachment. The 'Dime,' the 'Half-Dime,' the 'Pocket,' the 'Half Asleep,' the 'Handy,' and the 'Unhandy,' Series, etc., are now in brisk demand. They are called 'Libraries' because they are not intended to be stored in libraries. It is often best to describe a thing by telling what it is not, like the Lancashire pie which was neither fish, flesh, nor fowl.

Being without covers, they have a cool and summery look, and from their flexibility may be readily stowed away in one's pocket or thrust into any unfilled corner of a traveling bag. They adapt themselves to any conceivable reading attitude, from the bolt upright to the recumbent position assumed on a sofa or lounge or in a steamer chair, hammock or bed, or stretched out on greensward or sandy beach. In fact, these libraries are the literary manna of this modern desert of push and struggle for material welfare. Their issues may almost be had for the trouble of stooping and gathering them up.

A step above these sans culotte productions of the printing press and the genuine paper-covered book is reached, often quite aristocratic and refined in its appearance, bearing a tacking device printed in colored ink, at times a design of not a little artistic merit. Then still higher and the 'flexibility' and 'limps' are reached, some of them paper backed with cambric, some cloth, some imitation russia, some genuine morocco."<sup>79</sup>

Statistics for the year 1887 show that publication of the better class of cheap libraries

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79. American Bookmaker, 5:6 (1887).

continued unabated during the year, with seven hundred titles being added to them. Their publishers had found that the more serious books did not do so well in the cheap form, and even with the most liberal calculations not more than twenty-five of the seven hundred can be classified as other than fiction. Of a total number of books of fiction important enough to gain notice by the Publishers' Weekly, one thousand and twenty-two, almost two-thirds were issues of the cheap libraries. It should not be thought that these figures represent six hundred and seventy-five new novels, however, for in the majority of cases there were several rival editions of the same novel. The good books of the past which had for many years been added to the cheap libraries were by this time pretty well used up and the quality of new additions was undoubtedly on the decline.<sup>80</sup>

In order that books could be published at low prices it was necessary that printing costs be low, and many printing establishments during the 1880's were forced into bankruptcy as a result of doing business on too close a margin.<sup>81</sup>

## 1888

The year 1888 was notable in that it witnessed a very definite decline in popularity of foreign novels published in the cheap libraries. This declining interest in foreign novels was accompanied by the increasing popularity of American novels in paper covers. American novels in paper, included in such series as Scribner's Yellow Covers, Ticknor's Paper Series, Houghton, Mifflin's Riverside Paper Series at fifty cents a volume had created a market for American copyright books in paper. Whereas there had been only a few of these published during the years from 1877 to 1885, since that time the number had been

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80. Publishers' Weekly, 53:315-16 (1888).

81. American Bookmaker, 7:185 (1888).

steadily growing. The Publishers' Weekly found that of the five hundred and fifteen novels issued in the cheap libraries during 1888, a smaller number than had ever before been listed,<sup>82</sup> one hundred and forty were American copyright books, a much larger number than had previously been issued in this form in a single year.<sup>83</sup> There were several reasons for the declining popularity of foreign novels. Probably the most important was that the quality of this free material had steadily been growing poorer. For several years after the beginning of the cheap reprints the great store of old and tested literature, in addition to the new foreign books, had been sufficient to provide reasonably good and popular material. Now, however, the number of works worth reprinting had been largely exhausted, and the libraries were to a considerable extent "running empties."<sup>84</sup> Undoubtedly, too, the taste of the people was changing, and they no longer were so anxious to pay from fifteen to twenty-five cents for a book poorly printed on cheap paper. The American copyrighted books with superior printing and paper at fifty cents a volume, were supplying paper books at a moderate price, and a public becoming tired of mere cheapness, bought them in fairly large quantities. Scribner's Yellow Covers, for example, had an average sale of ten thousand copies, and the Ticknor Paper Series about the same.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the increasing popularity of American books, American authors were not well paid. In 1888 it was said that the average American book paid its author less than two hundred dollars.<sup>86</sup>

The publishers of some of the cheap libraries such as the Seaside, in an attempt to stimulate sales,

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82. Publishers' Weekly, 35:204-05 (1889).

83. The Weekly first included the cheap libraries in its annual summary, covering the year 1881, in January 1882.

84. Publishers' Weekly, 33:634 (1888)

85. Ibid.

86. Public Opinion, 6:356 (1889).

reduced the wholesale price of twenty and twenty-five cent books to eight cents.<sup>87</sup> At so low a price there was little chance for profit to the publishers and many of them began to look to international copyright as the means of remedying the situation.<sup>88</sup> Some of the outstanding pirates, George Munro, John B. Alden, and John W. Lovell, expressed a desire for copyright. Munro, formerly of the opinion that foreign authors were a greedy lot and undeserving of payment for their writings, conveniently wished that a law should be passed that would "secure recognition of authors' rights, and compensation to them for the use of their property at home and abroad."<sup>89</sup>

For a long time the typographical unions and others interested in the manufacture of books had opposed an international copyright on the grounds that it would reduce the amount of work for printers, binders, etc. They were beginning to see now, however, that the cheap library reprints of the Seaside variety, and the cheap twelvemos such as those of F. M. Lupton, and Pollard & Moss, reset from printed matter, largely by girls, was work which paid the least.<sup>90</sup> These books were put in type by stereotype establishments, known to the trade as "sawmills." Many books were put into type only once, the plates then being sold to the different cheap publishers who would issue their own editions, editions thus differing only in paper, binding, and imprint.<sup>91</sup> In the case of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's Robert Elsmere there were only four sets of plates but double that number of imprints.<sup>92</sup>

The trend during 1888 was definitely toward better made paper books, although both paper and cloth-bound books of the "cheap and nasty" variety, to

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87. American Bookseller, 23:6 (1888).

88. Publishers' Weekly, 33:44-47 (1888).

89. Ibid., p. 67.

90. Ibid., p. 44-47.

91. Ibid., 37:228-30 (1890).

92. Ibid., 34:950 (1888).

borrow Carlyle's phrase, continued to be issued in enormous quantities. At the beginning of the year Harpers, having given up the old quarto Franklin Square Library began the publication of a new twelve-mo series under the same library name. This new series was "not yet an ideal cheap book" but was in point of type, paper, and general make-up superior to the cheap libraries then in the field.<sup>93</sup> The change in format of the Franklin Square Library was accompanied by an increase in price, most of the volumes being sold at from thirty to fifty cents, depending on length and whether or not they were copyrighted.

In June, Appletons began the publication of the admirable Town and Country Library which they issued twice a month in order to gain the advantage of the cheap postal rates. The Town and Country Library, priced at fifty cents a volume, contained chiefly fiction, both of American and foreign authors.

Despite the intense competition among the cheap library publications, Mr. John W. Lovell was optimistic as to their future, and in May, 1888, he invested a quarter of a million dollars in buying out one of his most formidable rivals, Mr. Norman L. Munro, publisher of the ten and twenty cent Munro Library which at that time contained eight hundred and twenty-five volumes. As the Publishers' Weekly pointed out, the addition of the Munro Library gave Lovell, "an extraordinary line of cheap books."<sup>94</sup>

In the January 1888 issue of the North American Review Mr. R. Pearsall Smith, a champion of cheap books, pointed out that an international copyright would be a great misfortune. According to Mr. Smith, "The 100,000,000 low priced reprints circulated here within a few years and to be reissued in the next decades, would be contracted to 10,000,000. None can estimate what would be the loss to the lonely rancher

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93. Publishers' Weekly, 33:183 (1888).

94. Ibid., p. 750.

in Dakota, the humble freedman at the south, and the poor student eager for a library of his own made unpurchaseable by legislation."<sup>95</sup> He stated that of the most popular novels, religious works and histories, five hundred thousand copies were sometimes published in low priced editions. Henry Holt took exception to this statement, saying that this could not be true of any more than half a dozen books since unrestricted piracy began in 1877. He doubted if so many copies had been sold of a single novel; that in fact he would be surprised if of any five or six novels there had been half that many sold. He added that he would be astonished to find Mr. Smith's figures correct regarding a single history of any religious book.<sup>96</sup>

There were many like Pearsall Smith who defended the lack of international copyright on the grounds that without it books were cheaper and more widely read, especially by those who would be unable to buy more expensive editions necessary under a copyright. The Assistant Librarian of Albion College, Mr. B. S. Taylor, stated this position when he wrote, "If you raise the price of alimentary food, you make the people work a little harder or live a little more plainly; but if you raise the price of intellectual food, you degrade the intellectual standing of the nation."<sup>97</sup> The Boston dry goods firm of Houghton & Dutton expressed approval of the cheap library system as follows,

"The writer has traveled extensively in the United States, and has seen George Eliot, Carlyle, Scott, Victor Hugo, Emerson, Edwin Arnold, Homer, Goethe, Dante and Shakespeare read in the backwoods of Arkansas and in the mining camps of Colorado, in the popular 10 or

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95. North American Review, 146:70 (1888).

96. Forum, 5:27-46 (1888).

97. Christian Advocate, 63:460 (1888).



20 cent editions, by people who could never have afforded the books, and who probably would never have read them, had it not been for the price. Cheap books are almost as necessary in these days as cheap bread. At a fair estimate there have been 150,000 copies of "Robert Elsmere" sold in this country. Had the figures been put at the English publishers' price, or even the American publishers' price, the sale would have been, at the very utmost, not more than 1/4 the number."<sup>98</sup>

The American Bookseller had observed at the beginning of the year that although the cheap libraries were paralyzed as a result of cutthroat competition, the cheap cloth-bound twelvemos, such as those issued by Belford, Clarke & Company and Porter & Coates were doing better. "One publisher intends to put upon the market three-quarters of a million of this grade of books, which he hopes to manufacture at such a price that they can be retailed at 25 cents, and sold to the dealer at a third off, or better."<sup>99</sup>

Looking back over the year 1888 the Publishers' Weekly found that during this time the cheap quartos had altogether disappeared, and that "the entire business of unauthorized cheap reprinting seems to have reached very nearly its natural end." The re-printers were now dependent upon the English and foreign books that were available from month to month. The risk involved had resulted in "An increase in the price of the cheap reprints to an extent which makes the transition very easy to authorize issues at a reasonable price under international copyright... Several of the reprint publishers have resorted to the device of issuing in two parts, say at 20 to 25

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98. Boston Herald, 1888. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 34:884-85 (1888).

99. American Bookseller, 23:22 (1888).

cents each, books which a publisher under copyright relations ought to be able to issue in one volume at 35 to 50 cents in much better shape."<sup>100</sup>

## 1889

The American novel in paper covers continued to increase in popularity during 1889, and the American Bookseller stated that, "The straight away fifty cent American novel is selling better than anything else. A few years ago the bookstores would have nothing to do with it... But now the American novel has taken the place of its English rival and the demand for English books, which used to be so general and which was so profitable to three or four publishers here, has almost died out."<sup>101</sup>

As cheap reprints of foreign books became less saleable on their own merits, various methods of distribution came into use. Early in 1889 a soap manufacturer announced that he would give a copy of a celebrated novel, then recently issued, with every fifteen cent cake of soap! Another firm appropriately put on the market a machine to vend the mechanically produced paper volumes, so that by inserting a nickel in a slot and turning a crank a novel could be made to drop into one's hands.<sup>102</sup> The American Bookseller noted that whole sets of books were being offered free with the purchase of a fifty cent bottle of patent medicine.<sup>103</sup> The combination of books and soap seemed to work the best, however, and the following year a manufacturer put on the market a product trade-marked "Book Soap." "The great unwashed"<sup>104</sup> were promised a different book with each purchase of a

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100. Publishers' Weekly, 35:7 (1889).

101. American Bookseller, 26:252 (1889).

102. Publishers' Weekly, 36:511 (1889).

103. American Bookseller, 25:128 (1889).

104. Ibid., 27:82 (1890).

fifteen cent cake of soap, the choice ranging from Scott and Dickens to Stevenson and Haggard. The manufacturer had cornered, it was said, over two million novels for this purpose.<sup>105</sup>

Further evidence of the declining popularity of cheap foreign reprints is attested to by the fact that whereas in 1885, at the peak of production, George Munro had added more than four hundred numbers to his Seaside Library, during 1889 he added less than a hundred. Seeing that American books were coming in-to favor Munro began in April the publication of a monthly Library of American Authors, at the uniform price of twenty-five cents a volume. This new series was, from a standpoint of paper and printing, no improvement over his old Seaside Library.<sup>106</sup>

The cheap cloth-bound twelvemos of popular standards, manufactured "by the ton," by such firms as Belford, Clarke, were being sold at this time at prices which could hardly pay for the manufacturing costs. Obviously business could not be carried on under such circumstances, and during the year several firms were forced into bankruptcy. The largest failure was that of Belford, Clarke & Company, a firm which had had because of its price-cutting methods, a demoralizing effect upon publishing and bookselling for many years. Another failure was that of Pollard & Moss, who carried on much the same sort of business, and concerning which the Publishers' Weekly said, "They have been so far outside the lines of the 'regular' trade that we have found it almost impossible to get bibliographical record of their books each year, despite every effort on our part to do so."

Financial difficulties among the cheap book publishers, most of whom were considered to be pirates, had been common from the beginning of the cheap book period. As the Publishers' Weekly pointed out on several occasions practically all of these publishers

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105. Critic, 16:54 (1890).

106. Publishers' Weekly, 36:896 (1889).

had failed at least once, and some of them several times. After settling with their creditors for a small percentage they were often able to secure new capital, and to continue in business a few years longer, only to repeat the process. Most of the cheap book publishers who failed after 1888, however, were through for good, as the outlook for this type of publishing was none too bright.

John W. Lovell, now replacing George Munro as the outstanding figure in cheap book publishing, announced in the spring of 1889, his plan for a "Book Trust." The purpose of this book trust or "Combination" was to stabilize prices and eliminate ruinous competition. His plans were not completed, however, until the following year. It is interesting to note that Lovell, who had always been regarded as a pirate, was now not only publishing American copyrighted books, but also foreign books by arrangement with the authors, at "a slight increase in the retail price."

Juvenile books had for several years been the object of price cutting. "Quarto juveniles are to-day manufactured at so small a margin that it doesn't pay to push them; they are really made to supply the cheapest kind of market--the dry-goods counter. There they sell anywhere from 25 cents to 60 cents, scarcely ever reaching the dollar line."<sup>107</sup> Competition in this line of books was very savage. The juveniles mentioned were not only those published by the cheap firms, but also those from the better class of publishers. Books of this type had been deteriorating in quality and were being handled more and more in grocery stores, department stores and "cheap Johns."<sup>108</sup>

Strangely enough, despite the extreme competition among the cheap libraries, new ones sprang up during the latter part of 1889. As the American Bookseller pointed out, this was probably because of

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107. Publishers' Weekly, 36:959 (1889).

108. Ibid., p. 306-07.

"the conviction that the International Copyright Bill will pass and put a stop to piratical reprinting of English books for which our publishers have paid."<sup>109</sup>

During this year the Publishers' Weekly recorded four hundred and fifty books as issues of the best known cheap libraries. In addition there were a large number of other books in paper covers, "the year witnessing more books sent out in paper covers than we have ever before known. Many of the covers were pretty and tasteful, and the paper and print generally tolerably good, while the cost was so small as to seem to leave but a small margin of profit."<sup>110</sup> The cost was certainly low for American copyright books, and for new foreign books on which the author was paid a royalty, most of them selling at from thirty to fifty cents. It was claimed nevertheless, that many of these paper books were profitable to both the author and publisher. It seemed at this time that American publishers, especially of novels, were to follow the French method of issuing new books in paper covers.

Early in 1889 Frank Lovell, whose publishing activities were closely related with those of his brother, John W. Lovell, announced the issue of a new series of cheap novels, foreign as well as American, all to be published by arrangement with the authors. This was not a new idea even among publishers like Lovell, but the public announcement of the policy by this firm was significant. Payments to authors necessitated a slight increase in price, a novel of one hundred and eighty-four pages by Katherine MacQuoid being listed at thirty cents, and one of four hundred and four pages by H. F. Lester was fifty cents. The Publishers' Weekly suggested that these books in the older cheap libraries would probably have cost twenty and forty cents, and that, "with

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109. American Bookseller, 26:518 (1889).

110. Publishers' Weekly, 37:145 (1890).

reasonable trade discounts instead of exaggerated ones, a well printed 12mo library from 30--50 cents paying 10 per cent to the author, ought to pay a publisher a fair profit."<sup>111</sup>

## 1890

The year 1890 was an eventful one for the publishers of cheap books. The point had been reached where the reprints of foreign books in libraries, and the cheap cloth twelvemo standards were, in many cases, actually losing money for their publishers. The previous year these publishers had not been ready to follow John W. Lovell's suggestion that prices on their books be raised and standardized in an attempt to eliminate cutthroat competition. When he offered to buy their surplus stock and buy or lease their book plates, however, most of them were glad to accept the offer. In January 1890, Lovell took over from Munro the famous and once profitable Seaside Library, and before many months passed he had acquired the plates and stock of most of the other cheap book publishers. In July of the same year the Lovell Company was transformed into the United States Book Company with a reported capital of three and a half million dollars. It was thought by some that the formation of this "Book Trust" would help the cause of international copyright, as it disposed of the cheap book publishers' argument that copyright would provide a book trust of the strongest publishers.

International copyright, which it was realized would mean the downfall of the cheap foreign reprint, still met with a considerable amount of opposition. It is interesting to note that many of those favoring copyright argued that the cheap foreign fiction which flooded the market was "un-American, weak and often grossly immoral,"<sup>112</sup> while

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<sup>111</sup>. Publishers' Weekly, 35:428 (1889).

<sup>112</sup>. Ibid., 37:300 (1890).

many who opposed copyright considered that the cheap reprints had done and were doing a great deal to disseminate good literature. According to the Chicago Inter Ocean "The trashy novels and machine poetry, of the making of which there is no end, are largely crowded out by the very cheapness of really classic literature. This may be hard on the Bellamys and Bowkers of our own country, but it is a great thing for the people. The yellow-covered trash which used to cover the land like a flood, and which brought the term 'dime novel' into such disrepute, has been largely driven from the market by really first-class books which are quite as cheap. The millions of English reprints sold in this country do incalculable good. Put a royalty on them and their sale will be restricted to a few."<sup>113</sup> The truth of the matter was that the cheap book system, due to lack of copyright, had been responsible for the distribution of large quantities of both good books and inferior ones.

Before the formation of his book trust, John Lovell and the other cheap book publishers were reported as being in favor of an international copyright. With most of the important libraries and twelvemo series under his control, and competition thus greatly reduced Lovell was again anxious that a copyright law be defeated. The passage of such a law appeared to be almost certain in the spring of 1890, but when brought to a vote it was defeated. Mr. Henry Carey Baird was probably right when, speaking of the defeat of the bill he said, "In my opinion the combination of 12mo publishers is responsible for its failure."<sup>114</sup>

Mr. O. B. Bunce, writing in the North American Review in April, 1890, compared cheap book production in the United States with that in England. He had found that in England there were many libraries of standard

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<sup>113</sup>. Chicago Inter Ocean, 1890. Reprinted in Public Opinion, 8:503 (1890).

<sup>114</sup>. American Bookseller, 27:262 (1890).



works at a very low price that were greatly superior in printing, binding, and paper to any corresponding books published in this country. Morley's Universal Library, neatly printed and bound in one-half cloth at thirty-six cents a volume, the Chandos Classics, a collection of standard authors, bound in cloth, at thirty-six cents, found no counterpart in the United States. "We have editions of the standard authors offered at low prices; but they are, for the most part clumsily made, badly printed and vulgarly bound. No man with a taste for well-made books can touch them... Editions that unite perfect workmanship with great cheapness are not made in the United States." Mr. Bunce had found that despite the "reputed reputation" of Americans to brag, it was very difficult to obtain information as to the number of copies of books issued by American publishers.<sup>115</sup> Mr. Bunce's words explain the difficulty encountered in attempting to locate sales statistics for cheap books published during this period.

Shortly before the appearance of the above mentioned article, A. L. Burt, publisher of the paper-covered Manhattan Library of standard fiction, announced the beginning of an important new cloth bound series to be called Burt's Library of the World's Best Books. It aimed "to place within the reach of all a complete, rich, and uniform library of the classics of the literature of every language."<sup>116</sup> This series provided the type of book which Mr. Bunce had noted as lacking in this country, but priced at a dollar a volume was in a higher priced group than the English series.

An effort was made in 1890 to raise the rate of postage on paper covered books. In supporting such a measure, Thomas H. Cree in the Christian Advocate expressed concern over the fact that the

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<sup>115</sup>. North American Review, 150:470-79 (1890).

<sup>116</sup>. Publishers' Weekly, 37:411 (1890).

writings of Zola should be carried for a cent a pound, while Bibles were charged eight cents a pound.<sup>117</sup> Postmaster General Wanamaker reported that there were some ten million pounds of books in the cheap libraries carried each year in the mails of New York alone and probably half as much more from other cities. The cost to the postal department for transporting these cheap issues, said Mr. Wanamaker, was four or five times as much as the postage amounted to.<sup>118</sup> The law provided that paper-covered books, in order to secure the one cent a pound rate, be issued at least four times a year, and that there must be a list of subscribers. The Postmaster General said, however, that some of them appeared without any note as to frequency, and that sometimes authors issued their own books in this form in order to gain the lower rate. "In one of them the author plainly states that he is not sure of issuing more than one volume." Unless news dealers and chance purchasers were to be considered as subscribers, and they were not so considered by law, the cheap libraries had no legitimate list of subscribers, according to Mr. Wanamaker.<sup>119</sup> The Postmaster could refuse to admit books not correctly issued<sup>120</sup> but there was "very little opportunity of knowing that the law is really complied with." In some cases the subscription price was more than the total cost of the individual issues.<sup>121</sup> Mr. Peterson of the firm of T. B. Peterson & Company, wrote to the Publishers' Weekly that although publishers put a

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117. Christian Advocate, 66:105 (1891).

118. Publishers' Weekly, 38:132 (1890).

119. Report of Postmaster General to Henry H. Bingham, Chairman of Committee on the postoffice and post roads. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 38:127-32 (1890).

120. Graham Pollard in the introduction to I. R. Brussel's Anglo-American First Editions, 1826-1900 (New York, Bowker, 1935), contends that the libraries must have had regular subscribers because of this provision in the law.

121. Publishers' Weekly, 38:127-32 (1890).

subscription price on their books, "that anomaly, a subscriber to a cheap library, cannot be found, and as the publishers sell their individual issues exclusively through the news companies to the retail dealers, it is fair to presume that the subscription rate is merely a blind to preserve a low rate of postage, and that they do not desire to be burdened with a subscription list."<sup>122</sup>

The Baltimore Sun, defending low postage, said,

"By 'libraries' is meant the publication of such works of fiction as are to be found in Harper's Family Library, Appleton's Town and Country Library, the Seaside Library, and others of a like kind. The exclusion from the mails as second-class matter would exclude cheap editions of the most popular English novelists and poets from Dickens to Tennyson, of many works on natural science, and travels and studies of men and manners, of which we may cite as examples Burnaby's famous 'Ride to Khiva' and Wallace's 'Russia.' There is a vast amount of good reading scattered through the mails all over the country at prices ranging from 20 to 50 cents a volume, and it serves to lighten many lonely hours in the solitude of the country, in farmhouses and villages, and in towns where workingmen and their families congregate. Publishers assert that in New York City alone, under the encouragement given by cheap postage, not less than \$5,000,000 have been embarked in the issue of this class of books; that thousands of persons are engaged in their manufacture, and that not only has the result been to reduce the cost of good literature fully 75 per cent, but that 'the library publications have done more to disseminate

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122. Publishers' Weekly, 33:422 (1888).

and popularize the best literature in the language than any other agency."<sup>123</sup>

With such arguments in favor of cheap postage, and with a raise in postage rates opposed by the strong Lovell organization and more than a hundred other publishers who issued paper books in series, efforts to secure passage of the bill providing for higher postal rates were defeated.

An even greater menace to the existing cheap book system than the proposed postal law was just around the corner, however, in the form of the international copyright bill. This bill was passed by the House of Representatives in December 1890, but was not passed by both the House and Senate until some three months later.

In July 1890, Postmaster General Wanamaker said that in his opinion causes for the development of cheap books were, "The lightning press, the folding machine, the roll instead of the sheet of paper for printing purposes, the more economical packing and freighting of materials, the introduction of wood paper, the absence of an international copyright law, enabling publishers to reprint books without authorial expenses; the increasing wealth of the country bringing about increasing demands."<sup>124</sup>

Looking back over the events of the year 1890, the American Bookseller noted that John W. Lovell's United States Book Company, controlling a majority of the libraries and cheap cloth-bound twelvemos, had reduced ruinous competition, and that there had been a gradual improvement in both the literary and material quality of these works.<sup>125</sup>

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123. Baltimore Sun, 1890. Reprinted in Public Opinion, 9:44-5 (1890).

124. New York Tribune, July 15, 1890, p. 2.

125. American Bookseller, 29:85 (1891).

## 1891

The passage of the International Copyright Act in March, 1891, effective July 1, marked the close of a period of cheap book publishing the character of which was determined largely by lack of international copyright. The cheap libraries did not thrive under the restricting influence of copyright. Their publishers, forced to compete with other publishers for new books so necessary to the life of the libraries, were soon out of the running. They found that it was impossible to publish such new books as they could obtain, at the former low prices, and so lost their main bid for popularity. The United States Book Company, under the managership of John W. Lovell, spent money lavishly in an effort to gain control of the foreign market, but through over-zealous methods became bankrupt early in 1893. As a result of numerous failures among the cheap book publishers, shortly before and after the passage of the International Copyright Act, large quantities of paper books and cheap cloth twelvemos were thrown on the market and sold at any price they would bring.<sup>126</sup> Some of these publishers continued in business for a few years longer, but most of them, whose business during this period had been mainly in cheap editions of non-copyright books, failed before the turn of the century.

By 1893 the Publishers' Weekly could say that there was an "almost entire cessation of the cheap and undesirable fiction--French and English--appropriated by piratical publishers and printed in villainous typography on worse paper in ten, fifteen, and twenty-five cent 'libraries.'" <sup>127</sup> Following the passage of the copyright law the cheapest issues of current fiction sold at from forty to seventy-five cents, and except in binding scarcely differed in any way mechanically from the higher priced books.<sup>128</sup>

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126. Literary World, 27:24 (1896).

127. Publishers' Weekly, 44:1063-64 (1893).

128. Ibid., 43:169 (1893).

## CHAPTER II

### REPRESENTATIVE PUBLISHERS OF CHEAP BOOKS

This chapter gives a separate account of important publishers who issued cheap books during the period 1870-1891. No attempt is made to include sketches of the activities of all the publishers of cheap books, but only of a representative group.

The names of these publishing firms have been arranged in two groups. The first group includes publishers who were concerned almost wholly with cheap books; the second group includes publishers with whom the publication of cheap books was not the most important of their publishing activities.

New York City, the center of the general book publishing business of the country, was also the center of cheap book production during the period, with Chicago perhaps next in importance, followed by Boston and Philadelphia. In addition to the firms included in this chapter, the appendix contains the names of, and brief notes concerning, a number of other publishers of cheap books. It has not been possible to deal more fully with these firms in the limited scope of this study, even though many of them were of undoubted importance. In addition it should be noted that there were quite a large number of publishers and printers scattered over the country, not mentioned here, who were engaged in issuing cheap books, most of them "pirated" editions.

## PART I

## Publishers Known Mainly For Their Cheap Books

T. B. PETERSON

During the nineteenth century in this country many publishers boasted about the low prices of their books, but none insisted so persistently on being known as the publishers of the cheapest of cheap books as did the firm of T. B. Peterson of Philadelphia. For many years the Peterson advertisements announced that it was the "Cheapest book house in the World" and on several occasions stated that a recently issued book was the cheapest book ever published.

Starting in business as a bookseller in 1845, Mr. Theophilus Beasley Peterson noticed that there was a demand for low-priced sensational fiction such as published by firms like Burgess & Stringer, Ballou & Gleason, and others. He decided to help supply the demand and in 1846, reprinted Charlotte Bury's sensational novel Ensnared which had been published in London in three volumes at about seven dollars and fifty cents. Mr. Peterson issued it in "cheap style," two columns to the page, in one volume for twenty-five cents, and it had a very large sale. The writer of his obituary notice in 1891 said that the publication of this book "may indeed be regarded as the first step towards providing cheap fiction;"<sup>1</sup> but the facts do not substantiate this statement, for Park Benjamin had published cheap fiction in the early 1840's, and at lower prices, though his efforts were not financially successful.

The success of this first book encouraged Peterson to continue in the same manner, to stereotype the most popular foreign and American books of fiction,

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1. American Bookseller, 29:24 (1891).



and to issue them in cheap form at a low price. He had a good knowledge of the reading taste of the masses, and with such books as those of Elleen Pickering, Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, Mrs. Grey, Captain Marryat, and T. S. (Ten Nights In A Barroom) Arthur, built up a prosperous business. The Petersons (two brothers, George and Thomas, were admitted to the firm in 1858) also published cheap paper editions of the most popular standards. The American Booksellers' Guide in 1872 noted that "T. B. Peterson and Brothers continue to pour from their presses those popular books which find favor with the masses of the people."<sup>2</sup> In addition to their claim of being the "Cheapest book house in the World," they called their cheap editions of standard works "Peterson's cheap editions for the million." In 1874 it was reported that the firm "has grown to be the largest publishing house of cheap books in the country," with plates for over a thousand works.<sup>3</sup> Their cheap paper-covered edition of Dickens sold in 1874 at twenty-five and fifty cents a volume according to length; booksellers were given a fifty per cent discount to enable them to pass on part of the discount to the public, and to allow for the soilage to which paper covers are especially susceptible. In addition to the paper-covered editions, Petersons also issued Dickens at higher prices, having no less than twenty different editions of his works.

Although Petersons published popular standard works, they did a large share of their business with the class of books popular at the time in circulating libraries and railroad stations. When the Seaside and other cheap libraries appeared in 1877, therefore, containing not only dime editions of standard literature, but floods of light popular literature as well, they came into direct competition with many of the Peterson publications. This competition was so

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2. American Booksellers' Guide, 4:7 (1872).

3. Biographical Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania of the 19th Century.

effective that, in 1880, the firm was forced into bankruptcy, a not uncommon occurrence among book publishers during this period, especially among those addicted to cheap editions. The creditors accepted a payment of fifty cents on the dollar, however, and the firm was reorganized and continued on its publishing career.<sup>4</sup> The same procedure was gone through time and again by cheap book publishers, except that rarely did the creditors receive so much as fifty per cent payment. The integrity of the Peterson firm is not to be questioned because of this misfortune, for they continued to be respected both as men and as publishers.

In 1884, Petersons boasted that Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth's novel, Self-Raised, a six hundred and fifty-eight page duodecimo in paper covers selling at seventy-five cents, was the cheapest copyright work ever published.<sup>5</sup> A couple of years later they announced that their illustrated edition of the Count of Monte Cristo at fifty cents was the "cheapest work ever published."<sup>6</sup>

In 1888, they began a twenty-five cent series which became very popular, including works of George Sand, Zola, Mrs. Southworth, J. Habberton, Mrs. Stephens, and others. Concerning this series the Publishers' Weekly noted that the Petersons were "continuing the publication of some of their best and most popular \$1.50 novels at the unprecedented low price of 25¢," and later, that the fifty-two books so far issued "are proving to be one of the most popular and fast-selling series of books issued in this country."<sup>7</sup> The above-mentioned Mrs. Southworth was their most popular author from the time they published her novel The Lost Heiress in 1855, until 1890 when their list contained no less than forty-three of her works.

Petersons were one of the few cheap book publishing firms which did not issue paper-bound books

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4. Publishers' Weekly, 17:359 (1880).

5. Ibid., 26:177 (1884).

6. Ibid., 30:463 (1886), Adv.

7. Ibid., 37:215 (1890).

in serial form in order to send them through the mails at the low postal rate given second-class matter; they considered their publications books and not periodicals.<sup>8</sup> They were also one of the few cheap book firms which did not sell out to J. W. Lovell when he was forming his "Combination."

#### GEORGE MUNRO AND THE SEASIDE LIBRARY

George Munro gained world-wide fame as the publisher of the Seaside Library, a collection of cheap paper-covered books of English and European literature, which attained prominence and popularity during the latter part of the 1870's, and continued to sell in large numbers in the following decade. He was the most successful of that group of cheap book-makers, which included his brother Norman L. Munro, John W. Lovell, and Alexander Belford, all of whom came down from Canada to publish low-priced books for the American people. In 1883 it was reported that, "The imprint containing the words 'George Munro' is the most familiar in the United States."<sup>9</sup>

In 1856 Munro came to New York from Nova Scotia where he had been a mathematics teacher in the Free Church College of Halifax, and where he had completed a course in theology, though he never occupied the pulpit. In New York he was variously employed; about 1863 he was clerking in the firm of Beadle & Adams. "Beadle, in speaking one day to Edward S. Ellis, according to a story told by the latter, nodded toward our room where Munro, then forty years old was tying up bundles, and remarked, 'That man has worked for us nearly two years. I pay him sixteen dollars a week, he is perfectly content with that, he will never wish to change his situation or try to improve it.'<sup>10</sup> Beadle proved to be a poor prophet, for

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8. Publishers' Weekly, 38:132-33 (1890).

9. Biographer, 1:19-21 (1883).

10. Dictionary of American Biography, 13:331-32.

shortly afterward Munro established the publishing business of his own which a few years later became a formidable rival of the Beadle firm. He first published dime novels in imitation of the Beadle dime novels. In an advertisement for these dime novels in 1872 Munro stated that their sales could be counted by the tens of millions.<sup>11</sup> In 1867 Munro established the Fireside Companion, a cheap family newspaper which attained a wide circulation. In 1883 it was estimated that its weekly circulation was about a quarter of a million copies.<sup>12</sup> In 1872 he was publishing the adventures of Old Sleuth, by Harlan P. Halsey.

In May 1877 Munro embarked on the publishing venture which was to bring him fame and fortune, and that within a much shorter time than is common in the book publishing business. The idea of a series of cheap paper-covered books such as the Seaside Library was not original with him, for the Chicago firm of Donnelley & Lloyd had been publishing a similar series since 1875. Nor was the Seaside the pioneer in New York, for shortly before it was established Beadle & Adams had started the Fireside Library, perhaps the first of this type to appear in New York. Then came the Hillside and the People's Library, issued by Myers, Oakley & Company, and Frank Leslie had started the Home Library, of which only a few issues were published.<sup>13</sup> Then on May 28, 1877, the Seaside Library began publication. The first numbers in order of their appearance being; East Lynne, John Halifax, Jane Eyre, A Woman Hater, The Black Indies, Last Days of Pompeii, and Adam Bede. The series was enthusiastically received and Munro added new titles with amazing rapidity. The Seaside Library was in quarto size, printed on cheap paper, with two or three closely printed columns to the page. The number of pages

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11. American Booksellers' Guide, May 1, 1872.

12. Biographer, 1:19-21 (1883).

13. New York Evening Express, Reprinted in Seaside Library, no. 1882, p. 35.

in each volume varied from about twenty-five to seventy-five, the larger works being published in double numbers. Single numbers were retailed at ten cents, the double numbers at twenty cents. In order that they might be sent through the mail at magazine rates, each issue was given a volume number together with the date of publication.

As has been pointed out, the Seaside Library was not the first of its kind in New York. The Chicago Lakeside Library had circulated widely in the middle west, and in the east to a more limited extent. But the Seaside, with a new title being added almost daily, literally flooded the market, and was sold in quantities greater than any similar series of books up to that time.

Munro was quite generally called a pirate, but he affirmed that posterity would recognize him as a reformer. He argued that the publishers had created a monopoly and that they dictated terms to authors on the basis of non-interference among themselves. Helping himself to any and all non-copyright books that he wanted for the Seaside, and he wanted every novel worth printing, Munro foresaw that eventually the regular publishers would be able to profit so little from foreign books that they would get behind the movement for international copyright.<sup>14</sup> While he pointed this out on several occasions, he fought all attempts to put through a copyright law, until the time finally came when competition among the cheap book publishers grew so strong that this type of publishing was no longer profitable.

Munro did not boast of payments to authors, but it is known that payment was sometimes made. Ouida, a very popular author during that period, reported that Munro "was partly conscious that piracy is not altogether the perfectly enjoyable thing that it appears...from the additional fact that he sent me

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14. New York Tribune, Feb. 14, 1884, p. 2.

some 'conscience money' for one work...and that they offered to purchase some future advance sheets, an offer which I did not accept out of a loyal feeling due to long association with the Lippincotts."<sup>15</sup>

A defender of Munro's activities stated that Munro did not publish the works of foreign authors without payment, and that "So far from doing this, Mr. Munro takes care to remunerate the authors of all foreign books reprinted by him, excepting of such the copyright of which has expired." Further that, "he has yet to hear of complaint of unfair treatment from any one of these persons."<sup>16</sup> While it is not improbable that Munro did pay many of the foreign authors whose works appeared in the Seaside Library, the amounts paid were undoubtedly small in most cases. That he had some experience with foreign authors seems evident from his reply to queries concerning his large donations to Dalhousie College in Nova Scotia. Munro is said to have pointed out that this method of disposing of his surplus cash was "more sensible than paying an honorarium to the foreign author, who was never satisfied anyway."<sup>17</sup> Whatever the payments he made to foreign authors, there is no doubt that the activities of the Seaside and other such libraries made it increasingly difficult for publishers of better editions to pay foreign authors the rather slender honorarium to which they had been accustomed.

As early as 1879 Munro had advocated in his New York Fireside Companion, the royalty system of payment to authors, "by which every reprinter of foreign books would be required to pay a fixed per cent on the sales of such books to the author, the privilege of reprinting remaining...open to all."<sup>18</sup>

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15. London Times. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 24:165-66 (1883).

16. Biographer, 1:19-21 (1883).

17. New York Evening Post, 1883. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 23:173 (1883).

18. Fireside Companion. Reprinted in Seaside Library, no. 508, (1879).

The ten years following the establishment of the Seaside Library were the years of its greatest popularity and of its greatest growth. It is perhaps impossible to determine the exact number of volumes added each year, but the following table made from the pages of the Publishers' Weekly and the American Bookseller give the approximate yearly additions:

## SEASIDE LIBRARY

Edition	Year	Numbers	Total number added yearly	
Quarto	1877	1-193	193	
"	1878	194-432	239	
"	1879	433-656	224	
"	1880	657-899	243	
"	1881	900-1161	262	
"	1882	1162-1480	319	
"	1883	1481-1740	260	
Pocket	"	1-100	100	360
Quarto	1884	1741-1924	184	
Pocket	"	101-317	217	401
Quarto	1885	1925-2048	124	
Pocket	"	318-658	341	465
Quarto	1886	2049-2076	28	
Pocket	"	659-900	242	270
"	1887	901-1056	156	
"	1888	1057-1156	100	
"	1889*	1157-1253	97	

\*In January 1890, the Seaside Library was turned over to J. W. Lovell. In October 1892, it reverted to Munro.

When the Seaside Library became popular in 1877 its most important competitors were the Lakeside Library and the Riverside Library. By 1880 both of these competitors, along with several lesser ones, had been discontinued because of the overwhelming popularity of the Seaside, whose chief rival was the Harper's Franklin Square Library which began publication in the summer of 1878. In 1879, when the Seaside



had been flourishing for about two years, and five hundred and sixty numbers had been issued, it was estimated that five million five hundred thousand copies had been sold. The sale of many of the numbers had reached a total of more than fifty thousand copies, while the average sale was estimated at about ten thousand.<sup>19</sup> In a sketch of Munro's life in 1883, it was stated that the editions of the Seaside were never less than ten thousand copies, "aggregating a total of many million books." But, cautions the author, "as a new book is printed and published six days of every seven, it is impossible to be exact in the use of figures."<sup>20</sup> No further figures are available but if the supposed minimum printing of ten thousand copies is taken as an average sale for each volume, the Seaside must have sold somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty million volumes by the time it was taken over by Lovell in 1890. If one takes into consideration the reputed fortune of seven to ten million dollars Munro had accumulated at the time of his death in 1896, there is reason to believe that the sale may have been even larger. It must be remembered, though, that he had other money-making publications.

The Seaside Library was distributed through the facilities of the American News Company, and was largely sold by news dealers. It became necessary for the booksellers to handle the cheap libraries, however, especially in the smaller cities in order to meet competition, as the Publishers' Weekly pointed out on several occasions.

Besides publishing the most widely distributed cheap library in the English language, Munro in 1881 made a bid for the patronage of the German population of this country with his Deutsche Library. This series contained German literature as well as German

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19. New York Evening Express, 1879. Reprinted in several issues of the Seaside Library in 1879 and later.

20. Biographer, 1:19-21 (1883).

translations of English and French books. It was issued in quarto size, much the same as the Seaside Library, and sold for ten or twenty cents a volume. The first title published in the Deutsche Library was, strangely enough, Der Kaiser by George Ebers. The series became very popular among the German reading population in this country, and between 1881 and 1890 more than two hundred titles were added to it, all in quarto size. After 1890 no new titles were added.

For several years the quarto size issues of the Seaside Library were popular, but the readers began to tire of the unhandy size, and in the latter part of 1883 Munro was forced to begin the publication of a pocket-size edition. By 1884 the Lovell Library, the Franklin Square Library, and Norman Munro's new Munro Library were giving George Munro a good run for his money. Furthermore, publishers were beginning to think seriously of getting behind the movement for an international copyright law. Munro evidently thought that copyright was near at hand, for in February 1884, we find him saying, "Yes, the cruel war is about over. It seems as if we were about to have peace with honor and an international copyright...I foresaw from the beginning the inevitable result of this contest. But international copyright had no terrors for me as it had at that time for some of my neighbors. Profit in cheap libraries is small and daily growing beautifully less. In the Handy volume series<sup>21</sup> none at all. We shall continue to give the reading public cheap books only not quite so cheap."<sup>22</sup>

The change to the smaller sized volumes gave the library a new sales increase, although the profit was reduced. The new pocket edition, in addition to new books included reprints of the more popular titles in the quarto edition. Thus from 1883 until 1887 some of these titles were published in both sizes.

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21. The Pocket Edition of the Seaside Library.

22. Publishers' Weekly, 25:202 (1884).

Most issues of the pocket edition were priced at twenty cents, and Munro also offered them bound in cloth, postage paid, for fifty cents.<sup>23</sup>

Munro was continually involved in law suits attempting to restrain other publishers from using his name or the name of some of his publications. In 1887 some unscrupulous persons began to issue books under the name Seaside Library, and Munro appealed to the booktrade not to buy these pirated books, but to buy his. A correspondent to the Publishers' Weekly pointed out that this appeal was quite amusing, considering all the damage Munro had done the publishers.<sup>24</sup>

By 1887 competition among the cheap libraries was growing sharper, and in hope of increasing his sales Munro cut the "wholesale" price of the Seaside to ten cents for the twenty and twenty-five cent numbers and to five cents for the ten cent numbers. The hoped for increase in sales did not follow, and the "cheap counters" and dry goods stores sold them out in large quantities at less than one-half price.<sup>25</sup>

In 1888 it was reported that "some million copies of the Seaside Library that he supposed he had sold, came back on his hands."<sup>26</sup> If this was so it is not surprising that he said at this time, "There is no money any longer in publishing cheap reprints unless the publisher owns the copyright. Our own interests demand a copyright bill. And I can say that my ideas are shared by all the cheap reprint houses of this city."<sup>27</sup> Munro was evidently stating fact when he said that there was no longer any money in publishing cheap reprints of foreign works. In 1889 he began the publication of a series of copyrighted books, under the general title of the Library

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23. Munro catalog, 1885.

24. Publishers' Weekly, 32:39 (1887).

25. Ibid.

26. Forum, 5:41 (1888).

27. Commercial Advertiser, May 31, 1888. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 23:869 (1888).

of American Authors, at the uniform price of twenty-five cents a volume. "In general get-up, that is, paper and print--they are no improvement over his old Seaside Library," remarked the Publishers' Weekly.<sup>28</sup>

The year 1890 saw the end of some of the cut-throat competition among the publishers of the cheap libraries, when John W. Lovell gathered several of the most important firms into one large organization, the United States Book Company. On January 31, Munro turned over the Seaside Library to Lovell for a term of three years with option to purchase, stipulating that the Seaside be maintained under that name as a continued series.<sup>29</sup> The terms included payment to Munro of fifty thousand dollars and an additional four thousand five hundred dollars monthly. In October 1892, the contract was terminated by default and Munro once more took over the Library. During 1891 the United States Book Company had raised the price of the Seaside to twenty-five cents a volume at which it continued to be sold. After the passage of the copyright bill in 1891 the Seaside rapidly diminished in importance.

#### NORMAN L. MUNRO

The publishing activities of Norman L. Munro were to some extent overshadowed by the great success of his brother George, but Norman, among the first in the cheap library field, became the publisher of one of the largest cheap libraries. The brothers, George and Norman, were constant competitors in the cheap literature field in the 1870's and 1880's, each striving to outdo the other. It is said that between them there was "a hatred that existed to the extent that they never talked to each other even when they met on the streets."<sup>30</sup>

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28. Publishers' Weekly, 25:596 (1889).

29. Ibid., 52:16 (1897).

30. American Book Collector, 4:222 (1933).

Already known as the publisher of dime novels and cheap story magazines, Norman Munro began publishing his Riverside Library in 1877, the same year the Seaside was started and on much the same plan. A correspondent to the Contributors Club of the Atlantic Monthly wrote at the time,

"A speculative individual in New York has flooded the book-market with a series of English novels which he sells at the low price of ten and twenty cents per copy, according to the thickness of the pamphlet. These novels are issued in quarto shape, with three columns to the page, and vary from twenty to seventy-five pages each. It is certainly cheap literature, but it is not poor, as cheap literature is apt to be, for the plan of publication embraces the works of the great masters of modern English fiction, such as Bulwer, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Charles Reade, etc.... It is a notable and disgraceful piece of piracy, and if it is commendable, then the ingenious person who steps into your hall and gracefully appropriates your overcoat deserves to have a Philadelphia award. I hold that this New York literary tramp has done a very disreputable thing, and inflicted great wrong--First, on the English author, Second, on the American author, Third, on the American publisher...Fourth, on the general reader, who has eyes to be ruined by a poor-faced, fine type set in unleaded columns."<sup>31</sup>

The contributor thought that the name Riverside, hitherto known in connection with a firm notable for its good typography, was "obvious sarcasm."

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31. Atlantic Monthly, 40:619-20 (1877).

"I am the happy possessor of the fifth number of that series; it contains Thaddeus of Warsaw, by the adorable Miss Jane Porter, and the Paul and Virginia of St. Pierre--the latter work occupying just eight and one sixth pages, with 18,921 letters to the page. (I have counted them, with the assistance of a microscope.) Both stories, it goes without saying, abound in typographical errors. Thaddeus never quite so terribly treated as in the present instance."<sup>32</sup>

Munro advertised that he was selling one and two dollar books for ten and twenty cents, but he was not able to withstand the competition offered by his brother George's Seaside Library, and in 1879 when there were some hundred and forty-three numbers in the Riverside Library it was discontinued.

After giving up the Riverside Library, Munro continued in the magazine publishing business. In January 1884, he again entered the cheap library field, this time with a pocket-size series of foreign books to which he gave the name Munro Library. This library in a handier size than the old quarto Riverside, achieved immediate popularity, and no less than two hundred and sixty-six volumes were added during the first year. His brother George felt that a great part of this popularity was due to the name of the series, and that it was because of his (George's) efforts that the name Munro had become so widely known. Accordingly he attempted to restrain Norman from doing business under the family name in a manner to confuse the public mind, as he maintained. The courts nevertheless decided that Norman had a right to use his own name in connection with the series.<sup>33</sup>

In 1885 Munro added more than two hundred volumes to his rapidly growing library, and in 1886

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32. Atlantic Monthly, 40:619-20 (1877).

33. Publishers' Weekly, 28:489 (1885).

nearly two hundred more. In this year he achieved the distinction of having his life and his portrait published in the American Bookseller, with the statement that he was the founder of the cheap library series, which as we know was not true. It was also stated that Munro conducted one of the largest publishing establishments in the world, and that due to his distributing good books in large numbers at such a low price he was indeed a public benefactor.<sup>34</sup>

In 1886 the London correspondent of the American Bookseller wrote, "What we want this side are the reprints of Mr. Norman Munro. Those are the books that would sell in thousands, if only he could devise some means of buying up copyrights at £500 or £1000 apiece, and retailing his purchases at ten pence."<sup>35</sup>

The Munro Library continued to be published until May 1888, when the plates and stock were sold to John W. Lovell. Competition among the cheap book publishers was very sharp at the time, but the optimistic Mr. Lovell is reported to have paid Munro a quarter of a million dollars for the Munro Library. This consisted of eight hundred and twenty-five sets of plates and one million five hundred thousand copies of books. Concerning this sale, it was noted in the Publishers' Weekly that "Both parties to this transaction have had experience and it is safe to say have figured that both will profit by it."<sup>36</sup> As it turned out, Munro was extremely fortunate in getting out of the business at this time; if he had waited a few years longer his property would have lost most of its value.

#### RICHARD WORTHINGTON

Richard Worthington was born in England in 1835. Before coming to this country he dealt in

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34. American Bookseller, 19:103 (1886).

35. Ibid., pp. 214-15.

36. Publishers' Weekly, 33:752 (1888).



grain, but arriving in the United States in the 1870's, he turned his attention to publishing and bookselling and was so successful that in a few years he was operating one of the largest publishing and bookselling businesses in Canada and the United States. At first he was engaged mainly in importing English books, most of his stock bearing English imprints, but by 1883 at least three-fifths of his business was in books bearing the Worthington imprint.<sup>37</sup>

The Worthington publications were mainly sets of standard writers, twelvemos of popular and standard works, and juveniles. The catalog prices placed on these books were not particularly low, but as was so often the case with this type of publication, especially during the 1880's, the actual selling price was much less than the advertised price. Standard twelvemos listed at one dollar, and complete sets listed at somewhat over a dollar a volume sold for much less. The Worthington business came to be much like that of Belford, Clarke & Company.

The price-cutting activities of these and similar firms had a demoralizing influence upon the book trade.<sup>38</sup>

In 1882 Worthington purchased more than a hundred and fifteen thousand cloth-bound "standards" from John W. Lovell, who had decided to give up this type of publishing. It was reported that "This purchase, aggregating in retail prices about \$150,000, is a most extraordinary event in the history of the New York booktrade."<sup>39</sup> In 1884 Worthington bought the remainder of the Lovell company's books, "all their standard sets of books, red-line poets--etc., (except the Lovell Library)."<sup>40</sup> These sets of George Eliot, Thackeray, Dickens, Scott, and others, purchased at a low price, furnished good material for price cutting.

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37. Biographer, 1:27-28 (1883).

38. Publishers' Weekly, 47:7 (1895).

39. Ibid., 21:195 (1882).

40. Ibid., 25:191 (1884).

In 1889 when a proposed "combination" of cheap book publishers was being discussed, Mr. Worthington was in favor of it. Said he, "You see we've all got a lot of dead property on our hands in these plates. This concern alone has \$300,000 worth. As long as the present demoralized condition of things exist growing out of reckless competition this property is valueless."<sup>41</sup>

When the United States Book Company was formed in 1890 it took over a considerable part of the Worthington stock, including the Franklin Edition of popular twelvemos, and the cloth-bound World Library. When the United States Book Company failed, much of the stock came back again into the hands of Worthington.

In January 1885, the Publishers' Weekly reported that one of the chief failures of the previous year was "that of the Worthington Company, which put to an end a business that had long been a source of demoralization in the trade."<sup>42</sup>

#### HURST & COMPANY

The firm of Hurst & Company was founded by Thomas D. Hurst, who in early business life had been an electrotyper. From this work he turned quite naturally to the business of reprinting books, starting in Nassau Street, New York, in 1871. He specialized in cheap cloth-bound editions of standard works, known as cheap twelvemos, and was one of the pioneers in making this type of low priced book. He founded the Argyle Press from which poured forth the cheap publications bearing the Hurst imprint, and manufactured the famous pirated reprint of the Encyclopedia Britannica, published by Henry Allen and associates in 1886.<sup>43</sup> Among the most popular publications

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41. New York Herald, July 7, 1889, p. 21.

42. Publishers' Weekly, 47:7 (1895).

43. Ibid., 105:432 (1924).

of Hurst & Company was a Cameo Edition "comprising all the Best Works of the Great Poets." There were in 1880, twenty-two volumes in this series, ranging from two hundred and fifty pages to over five hundred pages in length, selling at thirty cents a volume. They included the poetry of such authors as Southey, Mrs. Hemans, Pope, Milton, and Scott. The publishers advertised that these volumes were "Tastefully printed and bound in the best English cloth" but in reality they possessed neither of these qualities, and the paper on which they were printed was abominable.

Another well-known Hurst series the Nassau Edition of twelvemo standard classics, contained such titles as Robinson Crusoe, Arabian Nights, and Pilgrim's Progress. These volumes also sold at thirty cents each, containing from four hundred to eight hundred pages each, and according to the publisher were "at once the Best and cheapest edition ever published."<sup>44</sup> As a matter of fact the Hurst books were never noted for the beauty or quality of their make-up, so that the publisher's boast should not be taken seriously. Hurst added an interesting note to his catalog, when in describing the American Diamond Dictionary of the English Language which he published, he said, "A man must be born a dunce who would speak or write a single word incorrectly when a complete Dictionary can be got for only 50 cents," and adds a rather common phrase used by the cheap book publishers, that "it is the cheapest book in the World."

Superior to either the Nassau or Cameo editions was his Arlington Edition of popular twelvemos, including popular and standard works. The Arlington Edition, during the latter part of the 1880's, included a total of over three hundred bound volumes, listed at one dollar each, but sold at retail for much less. Bound in fairly substantial cloth covers, the paper as in most of the cheap twelvemos of the time is disappointingly poor.

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44. Hurst catalog, in Publishers' Trade List Annual, 1880.

When the United States Book Company was formed in 1890, the plates belonging to Hurst & Company were leased by that company on a royalty basis. Speaking of the publications which had been taken over by this enterprise of John W. Lovell's, the Publishers' Weekly said in March 1890, that "most important of all,...Hurst & Co. have finally been induced to come into the arrangement." When the United States Book Company failed a short time later the plates reverted to Mr. Hurst, who again became an active publisher.

#### DONNELLEY, LLOYD & COMPANY'S LAKESIDE LIBRARY

Donnelley, Lloyd & Company's Lakeside Library, the pioneer cheap quarto library in the United States, was started in January 1875, about the 20th of the month. In 1879 there was a note in the Publishers' Weekly to the effect that the first number was issued in 1874;<sup>45</sup> this is undoubtedly a mistake, however, since volume 1, number 1 carries the imprint of Donnelley, Lloyd & Company, a firm which was not organized under that name until 1875. It had formerly been known as the Lakeside Printing and Publishing Company.

The plan for publishing the Lakeside Library was conceived by Mr. Lloyd, who "proposed the scheme to keep the presses of the firm busy."<sup>46</sup> He undoubtedly got the idea for such a series from the five and ten cent Tribune Extras of scientific reprints and from the ten cent Tribune Novels, which had been published since 1873. The Chicago Lakeside Library, however, marked the first successful attempt to publish dime books of good literature at regular intervals, in quarto form, and under the name "library." A prospectus for the library reads, "The great

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45. Publishers' Weekly, 15:280 (1879).

46. Thomas E. Donnelley, in letter dated May 7, 1935.

popular want today is Cheap, Good Literature. Dime novels are issued by the million, and good books by the thousand, but to the mass of readers the one is as distasteful as the other is inaccessible." The purpose of this new publication was to provide good books at dime novel prices. The first three titles issued were: Best of Husbands by James Payn, Wandering Heir by Charles Reade, and Golden Lion by Anthony Trollope, each of which sold for ten cents. Other titles included were: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne (a double number), Tale of Two Cities by Dickens, Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd, Scott's Talisman, and Cooper's Deerslayer. Several titles were issued in double numbers at ten cents a number, and a few, such as George Eliot's Middlemarch, in three numbers. With the exception of American books on which the copyright had expired, such as those of Irving and Cooper, the works included were almost exclusively by English and French authors. In addition to a fairly good percentage of the best books, there was, as the Publishers' Weekly pointed out, "a large amount of weak and sensational trash."<sup>47</sup> Most of the titles sold for ten or fifteen cents, with double numbers correspondingly higher. One, The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green by Bede, with one hundred and fifty illustrations, was priced at fifty cents.

The Lakeside Library was at first issued twice a month, then three times a month, and later every week. All were quartos, and although the exact measurements varied slightly, the average size was twelve and one-half by eight inches. Some were printed in double columns, and some three columns to a page, varying from about thirty-two to eighty pages per title. Many issues were illustrated throughout with wood engravings. The publishers advertised that the Library was "printed in large, clear, open type

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47. Publishers' Weekly, 15:280 (1879).

which can be read with ease and pleasure by young and old,"<sup>48</sup> and considering the price, the print was remarkably good.

The matter of securing postage at second-class rates was important for publications issued at such a price. To this end as well as for the important consideration of lower printing costs, the quarto size was assumed because it looked like a magazine and would be more likely to pass through the mails at periodical rates. Even so, there were occasional difficulties in securing this rate. Donnelley & Lloyd wrote to the Publishers' Weekly in July 1877, as a "fellow sufferer" since the Weekly had upon several occasions been denied the second-class postage rate by local postmasters. The letter read, "In our own case, which preceded their general advance upon the periodical interests, the Lakeside Library was carried for three years as a regular periodical; then, at the instigation of James H. Marr, during his personal visit to New York, it was decided 'not a periodical.' On submitting the case to the Department, it was referred to the Assistant Attorney-General, who decided 'it was a periodical within the law.' Immediately following the change of administration, the former Assistant Attorney-General was displaced, and the new incumbent promptly decided that 'The Library was not a periodical.'" And, added the irritated publishers, "If there is no hidden motive behind their actions, the present postal officials might be replaced with a different class of men without very serious injury to the interests of the country at large; they are evidently about two centuries behind the times, and do not understand the American ideas concerning cheap and widespread literature."<sup>49</sup>

The Lakeside Library, and the various libraries which followed, were for the most part distributed

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48. Lakeside Library, vol. 10, no. 262, 1879.

49. Publishers' Weekly, 12:74 (1877).

by the news companies. The bulk of the sales of the Lakeside was handled through the Western News Company.<sup>50</sup>

During 1875 and 1876 the Lakeside Library prospered, but in 1877 began to meet an influx of similar publications, until before long the "library" field was overcrowded. The pioneer Lakeside and the newer Seaside were outstanding, the battle for supremacy being between these two. Munro, the proprietor of the Seaside, had more financial resources than did Donnelley & Lloyd,<sup>51</sup> however, and issued numbers so much faster than they that he quite overwhelmed the Lakeside. In the early part of 1879 it was rumored that the latter was about to cease publication, and its sale to George Munro was announced in the Publishers' Weekly for March 15, 1879.<sup>52</sup> Along with this announcement was a note to the effect that the Lakeside had been a favorite in the west and had also circulated largely in the east, while the circulation of the Seaside had been confined almost wholly to the east. Unfortunately, there is no information concerning the size of editions, but if the sale of the Lakeside was somewhere near that of the Seaside, the average sale of the issues was probably at least ten thousand copies, although some of the titles are known to have sold several times that number. At the time the Lakeside Library was sold to George Munro, it contained two hundred and seventy numbers.

#### JOHN W. LOVELL

Although George Munro was undoubtedly the best known producer of cheap books in the late 1870's and during the 1880's, there was another publisher

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50. Thomas E. Donnelley, in letter dated May 7, 1935.

51. The firm name was changed to Donnelley, Gasette & Lloyd in 1879.

52. Publishers' Weekly, 15:308 (1879).



who achieved almost equal fame for his part in producing "books for the million" during the '80's. This man was John W. Lovell, the son of a well-known Canadian publisher of the time, John Lovell. The son received his training in the publishing business of his father, who in 1872 conceived the novel idea of setting up a printing shop at Rouse's Point, on the American side nearly opposite Montreal. There he sent his types to print British copyright works, paid the twelve and a half per cent duty on American reprints at the Canadian custom house, and having thus complied with the law passed in the interest of British authors, was able to sell the books in Canada "with safety and profit," and at a lower price than the British editions.<sup>53</sup> The son managed the Rouse's Point branch for about three years, and 1875 went to New York and began a publishing career of his own.

Lovell soon became well known through his low-priced editions of non-copyrighted books, and aroused the antagonism of the regular publishers. As the Publishers' Weekly put it, "An English<sup>54</sup> bookseller is J. W. Lovell, who under the pretext of doing a good work for the authors as well as the people, shows a preference for the printing of unauthorized cheap editions of such works as have been tested at the risk and by the efforts of authorized publishers... We are, indeed, inclined to believe that, should this country ever be blessed with an international law, it will in a measure be indebted for it to Mr. Lovell and the 'Revolutionists.'<sup>55</sup> Lovell voiced his opinion in the pages of the Publishers' Weekly, saying that he was in favor of the "Royalty vs. the Monopoly Scheme of Copyright." According to the royalty scheme any publisher anywhere could publish a book providing that he pay the author ten per cent royalty. This was, of course, not a new scheme, having been a favorite of several American publishers

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53. Canadian Monthly, 1:289-99 (1872).

54. Lovell later pointed out that he was an American citizen.

55. Publishers' Weekly, 18:302-03 (1880).

of cheap books beginning with Park Benjamin, or perhaps even before Benjamin. According to the royalty plan books would be kept low in price because of the threat of cheaper competing editions. When the suggestion was made that under this plan it would be difficult for a publisher to issue a higher priced edition of a book, Lovell replied that there was nothing to hinder a publisher from issuing several different priced editions from one set of plates, and that a publisher would be foolish if he did not do this.

In the few years before he began the cheap series which he called Lovell's Library, Lovell became well known for his cheap editions, such as Taine's History of English Literature, the English Men of Letters Series, the poetry of Jean Ingelow, and his reprints of the very popular annual Chatterbox which Estes & Lauriat, the original reprinters, felt rightfully belonged to them as they had been the first to reprint it under the Chatterbox title. Estes & Lauriat eventually secured a copyright on this publication, which then, it was said, was the "only foreign book that had the protection of American law."<sup>56</sup>

Reprinting in a competing edition, a book on which the original American publisher had secured a right through the "courtesy of the trade," did not always turn out successfully. For instance, when Lovell published a one volume edition of Taine's History of English Literature to sell at one dollar and fifty cents, the firm of Henry Holt & Company immediately lowered the price of their edition to one dollar and twenty-five cents. With these prices neither the original publisher's nor Lovell's edition was profitable. On some of his enterprises Lovell lost heavily, and in 1881, he failed, but not long afterward reorganized and was back in business again.

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56. Publishers' Weekly, 29:230-31 (1886).

He had now discontinued the practice of publishing editions to rival those of the regular publishers, and resolved to enter the field of the cheap paper-covered libraries.

On the fifteenth of April, 1882, the American Bookseller noted that "'Lovell's Library' is a new claimant of popular favor in the line of cheap literature, just commenced by the John W. Lovell Company, New York. The volumes are 12mo, printed from clear type, with an attractive paper cover, and sold at 10 and 20 cents, for single or double numbers respectively."<sup>57</sup> The first two numbers of this library were Longfellow's Hyperion, and his Outre Mer, of which the copyright on the first editions had expired, although the copyrights on the revised editions were still in force. The Publishers' Weekly left no doubt concerning their stand on this kind of publishing, saying, "Mr. Lovell is evidently bound to share the honors of the unterrified reprinters with Mr. Alden, of the defunct 'Revolution.' Both are equally aggressive and irrepressible. His favorite tactic is to pick out some favorite book for which some leading house has made the market. He is now reprinting Longfellow..."<sup>58</sup> It was later shown in court that Lovell had not reprinted wholly from the first edition, but had used some of the text of the revised editions. In 1884, Lovell entered suit in the New York Superior Court for damages amounting to twenty-five thousand dollars against Houghton, Mifflin & Company because of certain printed statements which Lovell considered damaging to his reputation for integrity and to his good name, but the case was decided against him.<sup>59</sup>

Lovell did not hold the advantage of his cheap editions of Longfellow long, for a few days later Houghton, Mifflin, holders of the copyright on

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57. American Bookseller, 13:167 (1882).

58. Publishers' Weekly, 21:406 (1882).

59. Ibid., 36:896-97 (1889).

the revised editions, published "Revised Copyright editions" of the two titles at fifteen cents each, in volumes of three hundred and sixty-four and three hundred and ninety-one pages, truly cheap books. According to Lovell, the Houghton, Mifflin edition was priced at less than the manufacturing cost.

The American Bookseller, a few weeks later remarked that "Mr. John W. Lovell, to whom American readers are indebted for many standard books at extremely low prices, has apparently reached the ultimatum of cheapness in his edition of Clytie, by Joseph Hatton, making 372 pages 12mo, tastefully bound in cloth, at fifty cents."<sup>60</sup> The edition mentioned was one of the numbers of Lovell's Popular Library. This title was also published as no. 7 of the Lovell's Library at twenty cents, and in Lovell's Standard Library at one dollar, as was the regular practice of Lovell at that time, the editions differing only in paper and binding.

Lovell was fortunate in choosing the "handy 12mo" for his cheap library, for although the cost of manufacture was more than that of the closely printed quartos of the Seaside Library, the latter were losing their popularity because of their rather inconvenient size. Although the editors of the Publishers' Weekly did not appreciate Lovell's reprinting of the Longfellow titles, they approved the plan of the library, saying, "Mr. Lovell has conceived the happy idea of starting, on the plan of the German cheap editions a series of cheap books in handy shape and neat cover--an idea on which he must be congratulated in spite of his reprehensible mode of inauguration."<sup>61</sup>

Lovell's Library was well received, and in fact it was a considerable improvement over most of the other cheap series. A letter addressed to Lovell from Mr. S. C. Donaldson, Assistant Librarian of the

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60. American Bookseller, 13:248 (1882).

61. Publishers' Weekly, 21:406 (1882).

Baltimore Mercantile Library, on August 29, 1883, reads as follows, "Will you kindly send me two copies of your latest list? I am glad to see that you now issue a volume every day. Your library we find greatly preferable to the 'Seaside' and 'Franklin Square,' and even better than the 12mo form of the latter, the page being of better shape, the lines better leaded, and the words better spaced. Altogether your series is much more in favor with our subscribers than either of its rivals."<sup>62</sup>

Lovell's Library contained mainly English fiction, but there was a scattering of books other than fiction, and some American books, both copyrighted and non-copyrighted. Among the titles were Cooper's Last of the Mohicans, Wilkie Collins' Moonstone, Canon Farrar's Seekers After God, Leonard Henley's Life of Washington, Henry George's Progress and Poverty, and the immensely popular East Lynne by Mrs. Henry Wood.

The following table made from the pages of the American Bookseller shows the approximate growth of the library from its beginning in 1882 until its end early in 1890.

LOVELL'S LIBRARY		
Year	Numbers	Total number added yearly
1882	1-50	50
1883	51-286	236
1884	287-482	196
1885	483-679	197
1886	680-850	171
1887	851-1105	255
1888	1106-1309	204
1889	1310-1467	158
1890	1468-1490	23

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62. This letter appeared in several numbers of Lovell's Library soon afterward.

As Lovell's Library gained in popularity, Lovell began to dispose from time to time, of his "Standards," "Red Line Poets," etc., in order to devote more attention to the library, "which has had a very great prosperity."<sup>63</sup> Up until this time Lovell had published, besides his cheap editions, some much more expensive editions. In addition to the ten and twenty cent volumes of Ruskin, he had published a set of Ruskin in sumptuous binding at four hundred and fifty dollars. On March 15, 1885, the Publishers' Weekly contained an announcement to the effect that Lovell had sold his entire stock of bound volumes to Belford & Clarke, that "Lovell will confine for the future exclusively to the 'Lovell Library.'" In order to encourage dealers to keep larger stocks, Lovell announced that he would "at all times, exchange unsold numbers of Lovell's Library for any others selected from the complete lists of that series, on the basis of retail price, and pre-pay mail or freight one way."<sup>64</sup> He also offered to supply any numbers of the Library in cloth at fifteen cents extra, or two ten cent numbers bound together for thirty-five cents.

In January 1885, Lovell began to issue "at the request of our readers" the complete works of Cooper, Carlyle, Scott, and Ruskin, in prices ranging from ten cents to thirty cents a volume, most of the volumes being priced at twenty cents.<sup>65</sup> The catalog of Lovell's Library for 1887 shows the following authors as being represented by ten or more titles,

T. S. Arthur	12	George Eliot	13
William Black	24	Mrs. Forrester	14
R. D. Blackmore	12	Mary Cecil Hay	12
M. E. Braddon	33	Washington Irving	20
William Carleton	11	Bulwer-Lytton	29
Thomas Carlyle	33	Florence Marryat	31
Bertha M. Clay	61	Charles Reade	11

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63. American Bookseller, 15:292 (1884).

64. Publishers' Weekly, 28:552 (1885).

65. American Bookseller, 17:24 (1885).

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Wilkie Collins	13	Ruskin	35
J. F. Cooper	32	Scott	31
Dickens	32	William G. Simms	17
"The Duchess"	22	Thackeray	31
Dumas	10		

Of the few American writers represented whose works were subject to copyright, T. S. Arthur led with twelve titles, followed by Suzanna Moodie with five titles, while Henry George and Miss Margaret Lee were each represented with four titles. One of the striking things about the Lovell's Library is its wide range of quality. It seems very strange, indeed, to see in the same collection the works of Thackeray, Scott, Dickens, and Carlyle along side the outpourings of Bertha M. Clay, and Miss M. E. Braddon, but it is apparent that this kind of a list would appeal to many different types of readers. There is little reason to believe, however, that under these circumstances, many readers could be found willing to subscribe for and receive all the books issued in the collection during a year's time. Lovell estimated that in his best years he was selling seven million volumes annually, most of them being in these cheap editions.<sup>66</sup>

Although Lovell had started his Library in 1882, at a time when the Seaside and Franklin Square were the great leaders in the cheap library field, it was not long before he was furnishing stiff competition. After the middle of the decade Lovell's Library was second to none in popularity. Before the end of the decade, he had taken over several of the other large libraries, including N. L. Munro's Munro Library, and George Munro's Seaside Library.

As pointed out, Lovell began his publishing business by issuing works which some other publisher had successfully introduced, and by issuing so-called "pirated" editions. Gradually, however, he came to

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66. New York Times, April 22, 1932, p. 17.



publish foreign books by arrangement with the authors, and to publish American copyright literature. He progressed from rather poorly-made books to better made books. As early as 1889 Lovell was a serious rival to the regular publishing houses in bidding for advance sheets of foreign books, and on several occasions he did outbid them. On at least one such occasion the defeated bidder turned around and pirated the Lovell edition.<sup>67</sup> Lovell was making contracts with foreign authors in preparation for the expected international copyright law, and he had the distinction of being the first American publisher of Barrie and Kipling.<sup>68</sup>

For several years the competition among cheap book publishers had been growing. While the published prices had been maintained, and in some cases raised, the practice of large discounts had grown to such an extent that the publishers generally found that their business was less profitable, and that some were losing money. In order to remedy the situation by eliminating as much cutthroat competition as possible, Lovell decided upon a plan to combine into a single organization the several libraries and cheap publications. This, the "Lovell Combination" will be discussed later.

#### BELFORD, CLARKE & COMPANY

Belford, Clarke & Company, by a pernicious system of price-cutting, probably did more to disorganize and demoralize the book trade in this country during the 1880's than did any other publishing firm. This enterprising firm was of Canadian origin, the three Belfords, Charles, Robert, and Alexander, having carried on a publishing business as Belford Brothers for several years in Toronto. James Clarke

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67. Publishers' Weekly, 37:354 (1890).

68. New York Times, April 22, 1932, p. 17.

joined them about 1875. When, a short time later, Charles Belford died, Alexander Belford and James Clarke moved to Chicago where there was more opportunity.

At this time the firm of Rose, Belford & Company was organized, and carried on a business which ended in bankruptcy. Then followed, in March 1879, the establishment of Belford, Clarke & Company, which lasted less than a year. In January 1880, they became involved and settled at forty cents on the dollar.<sup>69</sup> The following May they incorporated as a stock company under the name Belford, Clarke & Company. It is difficult to obtain data concerning their operations until about 1885, but it is reported that they did a prosperous reprint business.<sup>70</sup> In 1884 the Publishers' Weekly stated that Belford, Clarke & Company were large publishers of books and that they refused, on repeated demands, to give information concerning their business.<sup>71</sup> They said it would be more advantageous to pay for withholding such information than to pay for having it published, for the nature of their business was such that advertising would do them more harm than good.<sup>72</sup>

This business which they did not care to advertise to the booktrade consisted of publishing books at artificially high prices considering their real value, which later would be sold at extremely low prices through dry goods stores and book stalls in department stores, and through temporary bookstores which they opened in the smaller towns, the system originated by Alexander Belford, the moving spirit of the organization. A twelvemo, cloth-bound book with a published price of one dollar would commonly be sold for from twenty-five to thirty cents, while Red Line Poets listed at a dollar and fifty cents would be

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69. Publishers' Weekly, 36:478 (1889).

70. Ibid., 70:1098-99 (1906).

71. R. S. Pease, and the Caxton Publishing Company also refused to give information concerning their businesses.

72. Publishers' Weekly, 26:34 (1884).

"offered" at from fifty to sixty cents, the actual selling price invariably being in odd numbers, as twenty-seven cents or fifty-nine cents. Quite naturally booksellers found themselves hard pressed to meet such competition, and to even matters somewhat made it a habit to give a discount to almost anyone who asked for it.<sup>73</sup> Belford, Clarke & Company were not the first to publish books at an artificially high price,<sup>74</sup> but they were the first to build up an elaborate retail system in order to dispose of them. Another reason why they did not care to have their books advertised to the trade was that they were at that time large publishers of "Railroad literature."

In 1885 the firm became less secretive, and announced that during the year they would manufacture two million volumes. Of these there were to be one hundred "extra 12mos, 60 Popular, and 40 Household, and 70 Red Letter editions." They stated that they were printing at the time seventy-five thousand volumes of their fifteen volume Dickens alone.<sup>75</sup>

The American Bookseller was very happy to communicate to its readers in 1887 the news of the sale of Belford & Clarke's "dry goods counters" in the East to C. T. Dillingham, saying,

"This news is decidedly encouraging; a disturbing element, difficult to calculate, is now eliminated from the trade. The change was bound to come, in spite of all the Western energy and push thrown into the business, and legitimate methods were bound to resume their sway. The plates which Belford, Clarke & Co. have been using for their numerous publications which they have been scattering through the country by illegitimate methods, as we

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73. The practice of giving discounts to the retail purchaser had been started before the coming of Belford, Clarke & Company.

74. The regular publishers had used artificial prices in order to allow for large discounts.

75. American Bookseller, 17:168 (1885).

must consider them, are remarkably good--all new, with clear legible type--and their books will find a ready market now, when they are once more restored to the general trade. The immediate effect of the change will be of stiffer prices both in the retail and jobbing lines of business that have suffered so much from under cutting."<sup>76</sup>

These sanguine predictions concerning Belford, Clarke & company's elimination as a disturbing element in the trade were not borne out by the ensuing activities of the firm. True, they did distribute their books through the regular channels of the trade, but no sooner were the booksellers well stocked up with their publications than they returned to their former methods of price-cutting. Their elaborate system of distributing twelvemos and standards in sets was something like this:

First they would sell as many of their books as possible to jobbers, then send travelers out to get the regular trade well stocked up. Following this they supplied the dry goods stores or local "Cheap John" dealers at somewhat lower prices than the regular trade, enabling them to undersell the regular dealers. If the publishers were still overstocked they sent out traveling auctioneers who undersold both the book dealer and the "Cheap Johns," and induced a fairly exciting price-cutting war. Another resource was the "library associations" whose business was based on advertising "publisher's price," and "our price." Belford & Clarke also added Belford's Magazine to their book distributing facilities, offering a six volume set of George Eliot's works, listed in their catalog at ten dollars, "elegantly bound," with a total of four thousand six

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76. American Bookseller, 21:272 (1887).

hundred pages, together with a two dollar and fifty cent subscription to the magazine, all for four dollars and fifty cents.<sup>77</sup>

In this way they flooded the market with editions of such writers as Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Bulwer-Lytton, George Eliot, William Black, Smiles, Ouida, Haggard, and "The Duchess." Their Caxton Edition of cloth-bound twelvemos contained about a hundred and fifty volumes, mostly foreign novels, but also a few American copyright books, "to give the list a sprinkling of originality."<sup>78</sup> It was on these standard sets and twelvemos that they carried on their greatest price-cutting. The list price of the twelvemos was reduced to fifty cents, but they were commonly retailed at a lower price.

In 1889, during the period of fierce competition among the cheap book publishers, Robert Belford was quoted in the New York Herald as follows,

"The law of evolution applies to the reprinting business as to everything else. The fittest will survive. And the fittest should survive whether he be a 'pirate' or a 'courtesy of the trade publisher,' as I see you call them... The present unprofitable state of the reprinting business is not an unmixed evil. It is driving the publisher who heretofore got a living easily by stealing to hustle around for his daily subsistence. He is concocting all kinds of schemes, compiling books of biography, history, travel, etc. Competition has made and is making legitimate publishers out of men who had drifted into being a sort of legalized thieves."<sup>79</sup>

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77. American Bookseller, 26:258 (1889).

78. Publishers' Weekly, 36:930-31 (1889).

79. New York Herald, July 7, 1889, p. 21.

A short time later Belford, Clarke & Company were caught in the flood which they had done more than any other publishing firm to precipitate, and they were declared bankrupt. They explained their failure, saying that their "standard" editions had depreciated in value due to the great number of cheap standards on the market, and that they were forced to "meet the market" or leave their plant unproductive.<sup>80</sup> The fallacy of this argument, of course, lies in the fact that they themselves were among the first to practice cutthroat price-cutting. As a country bookseller asked at the time, "What other leading house has ever catalogued sets of standard works at \$10, \$12, \$16, etc., and sold them at \$2.40, \$3.60, \$4.80, etc., and even less? Belford, Clarke & Co. were the first, and most reckless, in making such reductions in prices, and forced responsible publishers into much unprofitable business, in a vain attempt to meet wildcat competition. Within a few weeks they have retailed their cloth-bound 12mos here at 25 cents, and when they went slowly at that price, put the books up at auction and sold them at any price they would bring."<sup>81</sup>

This last failure of Belford & Clarke put them definitely out of the publishing business, and in 1890 when Lovell was organizing the "Combination" their plates and stock were added to his ill-fated project.

JOHN B. ALDEN

Few men have been more heartily disliked for their publishing activities by American publishers and booksellers than was John B. Alden, leader of the "Literary Revolution," who sought to provide good literature for the masses at the lowest possible price, and actually sold it to them at prices below the cost

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80. Publishers' Weekly, 36:539-40 (1889).

81. Ibid., p. 637.

of production. A native of Iowa, Alden came to New York from Chicago, and with some fifty second-hand books and a capital of seventy dollars, he established in 1874 the American Book Exchange, so-called because of Alden's plan to exchange books with his customers, charging ten cents for each volume sold or exchanged. A few years later, noticing the success of the paper-covered Seaside, Franklin Square, and other cheap quarto "libraries," and at the same time realizing that most people would prefer to have their books in bound form and in a handier size, he decided that if such books were manufactured to be sold at a low enough price, the market for them would be practically unlimited. He contended that the publishing business was in the hands of a group of monopolists who cheated the public at every turn, and decided that he would publish good literature at the really low price at which it should and could be published. In order to obtain the capital for such an enterprise he formed a stock company and sold shares in it. He began his publishing activities in January 1879 with the Acme Edition of standard authors, convenient sized volumes bound in cloth. The series contained the works of such authors as Shakespeare, Macaulay and Dickens, and sold at the unprecedented low price of fifty cents a volume. He also published the Acme Library of Standard Biography, at forty cents a volume, including many of the English Men of Letters Series. Alden's publications showed signs of hurried proofreading, as did most of the cheap publications of the time, and the paper was rather poor, but they were all that could be asked for from the standpoint of cheapness. Alden antagonized the bookseller by announcing that he would sell only direct to the consumer, thus cutting out the middleman's profit. Not many months had gone by, however, before he decided that the booksellers would be of use to him, and he offered his books to them at a twenty per cent discount. It would seem that with so small a chance for profit the bookseller would be



unable to handle such books. During this period, however, it was customary for the publisher to place an exaggerated list price on his books in order to allow the bookseller a liberal discount. The bookseller in turn commonly allowed his customers discounts ranging from ten to twenty-five per cent from those prices. Alden made no provision for this double discount, so that although his books were exceedingly low in price, they seemed to be even lower in comparison with those of other publishers. As a matter of fact, even with this small discount, he actually sold his books at less than it cost him to produce them. He placed his chances for success on the supposedly simple idea of mass production. For example, when he was about to print Young's Concordance, he explained that it would cost ten thousand dollars to set the type for it. If only one thousand copies were printed, the type-setting cost for each copy would be ten dollars. If one hundred thousand copies were printed, the cost for each volume would be only ten cents.<sup>82</sup>

Alden did not confine himself to the Acme and the somewhat higher priced Aldus editions of standard works. In the early part of 1880 he published the Library of Universal Knowledge, a verbatim reprint of Chamber's Encyclopedia with a considerable amount of American additions.<sup>83</sup> In his advertisements he stated that it was "An Encyclopaedia in 20 vols., over 16,000 pages; 10 per cent more matter than any Encyclopaedia ever before published in this country, and sold, handsomely and well bound in cloth, for \$10.00... An enterprise so extraordinary that its success, beyond all precedent in book publishing, may be fairly claimed to inaugurate a Literary Revolution."<sup>84</sup> Some forty years earlier Park Benjamin

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82. Publishers' Weekly, 17:515-16 (1880).

83. This encyclopedia was sold to Dodd, Mead & Co., in 1884, and after extensive revision was brought out by that firm as the International Encyclopedia, now the New International Encyclopedia.

84. American Bookseller, 9:143 (1880).

had boasted that he was bringing about a "revolution" in the publishing business with his shilling (12½¢) "books for the million."<sup>85</sup> Alden also liked the idea of a revolution, and in his advertising termed his publishing business a "Literary Revolution," by which name it came to be widely known.

On April 7, 1880, the Publishers' Weekly announced that it had refused an advertisement from Alden's firm, "because it conveyed false impressions, favorable only to the 'Revolution,'" and a fifty-six page advertising contract had thus been lost.<sup>86</sup> The editors of the Weekly stated that they had always been in favor of cheap books, but not books on which the publisher lost money. A few months later Alden declined to send his catalog for the Publishers' Trade List Annual because the Weekly had refused his advertisements.

In addition to his cloth-bound books Alden published two or three hundred small sized "Revolution Pamphlets." Following his custom of comparing the prices of his publications with those of other publishers, he pointed out that whereas Macaulay's Frederick the Great was being published at a dollar and twenty-five cents, the Revolution edition was sold for only three cents. Several of Shakespeare's plays were published separately in neat little paper-covered volumes of from sixty to seventy pages at the almost unbelievable price of three cents each.

In the summer of 1880 Alden stated that during the year and a half he had been in business he had published a hundred and twenty separate bound volumes, some two thousand tons of good literature, and in doing so had employed five hundred men and women regularly.<sup>87</sup> Hot cakes, said Alden, could not begin to rival the swiftness with which the Acme editions were selling.<sup>88</sup> In addition to the bound volumes he boasted that he was manufacturing an average

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85. New World, 4:242 (1842).

86. Publishers' Weekly, 18:157 (1880).

87. American Book Collector, 7:158 (1935).

88. American Bookseller, 9:142 (1880), Adv.

of ten thousand "Revolution Pamphlets" a day, and was still much behind the orders; that he had ordered ten thousand dollars worth of new machinery in order to increase his output.<sup>89</sup>

While he was supposedly doing such a prosperous business he became anxious that more people should have a chance to share in his good fortune. He therefore decided to distribute ten thousand shares of additional stock at ten dollars a share. Advertisements telling the details of this plan were published in several of the leading magazines, especially in the religious journals, in which it was intimated that the investor's money would be doubled within a year's time. The following interesting statistics were included to show how easily money was being made in the publishing business. It is the history of a single book, a work of eight hundred and twenty-eight pages, brevier type, about sixteen hundred ems to the page.

"For making the electrotpe plates.....	\$882.16
26,000 copies <u>Acme</u> edition, cost for pa-	
per and printing at 12 cents.....	\$3,120.00
Binding of same in cloth, at 9 cents....	\$2,340.00
8000 copies <u>Aldus</u> edition, printed, cost	
for paper & printing at 17 cents...	\$1,360.00
Binding of the same in half russia,	
gilt top, at 20 cents.....	<u>\$1,600.00</u>
Total cost of 34,000 copies.....	\$9,302.16

26,000 <u>Acme</u> edition, estimating all sold	
at greatest club rate of discount,	
50 cents each, less 15 per cent....	\$11,050.00
8,000 <u>Aldus</u> edition, ditto, at \$1.....	<u>\$ 6,800.00</u>
Total receipts for 34,000 copies	\$17,850.00
Gross profits in one year from an in-	
vestment of \$882.16.....	\$ 8,548.00

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89. Publishers' Weekly, 18:185 (1880).

'A Dutchman's 10 per cent' profit. Do you think we can afford it?"<sup>90</sup>

It will be noticed that no provision was made for payment to authors. Alden stated on several occasions that he did not favor the royalty system, that he did favor an international copyright and that the Revolution would force the other publishers to get behind a movement for international copyright. When English authors asked him for payment for their books, he told them that the increased circulation he was giving their works should be payment enough, and would help the author's sales when copyright did come.<sup>91</sup> At all events, Alden did not pay royalties on the books he published, though as a matter of fact many of them were standards on which none of the American publishers paid royalties. He also neglected to include his advertising costs, which were large, amounting in 1880 to more than twenty per cent of his gross cash receipts.<sup>92</sup> His arguments were nevertheless convincing to quite a number of people, and the fact that his list contained the very best books further influenced large numbers of clergymen and a "good many booksellers" to become stockholders.<sup>93</sup> The very low price of paper in 1879 favored Alden's business, but early in 1880 prices advanced sharply, working a hardship on all the cheap book publishers.<sup>94</sup> Cheap paper would not have saved the "Revolution," however, for even in 1879 it was generally agreed among publishers that Alden was selling his books at less than the cost of production. The Publishers' Weekly had promised to publish from time to time an account of the development of this Literary Revolution, but noted in 1881 that it had entered upon a period of such "terrific slaughter" that it seemed

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90. Publishers' Weekly, 19:390-91 (1881).

91. Ibid., 27:334 (1885).

92. Ibid., 19:390-91 (1881).

93. Ibid., 22:137 (1882).

94. Ibid., 17:195-96 (1880).

more a subject for the Police Gazette than for a "sober trade journal." The vast sale for the Alden publications did not materialize, and this was fatal to his enterprise. On December 3, 1881, it was reported that a receiver had been appointed for the "Revolution," which had been carried for several months by a group of creditors. Following upon the bankruptcy large quantities of Alden's publications were dumped upon the market.

The failure of Alden's Revolution did not kill his desire to provide good literature to the people at low prices, and in 1882 he was still in the publishing business, at the head of the Useful Knowledge Company. In 1883 he was publishing the Elzevir Library, which included many of the little paper books he had formerly published. The Elzevir Library ranged in price from two cents for Rip Van Winkle, to fifteen cents for Bacon's Essays--Complete. Elzevir was a favorite name of Alden's. He published an Elzevir Edition of standards, and several years later, in 1893, while still organizing new companies, he established the Elzevir Publishing Company.

By 1885 Alden was again making his presence felt in the cheap book business. In that year the Boston Beacon stated that, "Whatever may be Mr. Alden's facilities for printing and selling books, he publishes very good books and magazines much cheaper than does anybody else, and his Ruskin is a triumph of cheap bookmaking."<sup>95</sup> In July the Toronto Week said that "Mr. Alden is certainly a well-abused man, and it is not easy to see where he makes a profit, but he has unquestionably placed much good literature within the reach of persons with limited means."<sup>96</sup> By this time he was in better standing with the book-trade. He sold his books at retail at a net price, and when they were ordered by mail he added twenty per cent. He had increased his discounts to dealers

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95. Publishers' Weekly, 27:582 (1885), Adv.

96. Ibid., 28:34 (1885).

to one-third. Alden had from the beginning insisted that the only right way to publish books was at a net price.

In 1886 it was noticed that Alden's publications were greatly improved in style, and that his catalogs were flooding the country.<sup>97</sup> In his 1888 catalog, listing a fifteen volume set of Dickens under the caption "The Dickens you say," he gives a good illustration of how the intense rivalry among publishers of cheap twelvemos had caused their price to be lowered. "Competition has become so sharp in certain lines that it no longer pays to manufacture books for the absurd prices at which they sell. This is notably the case with the works of Charles Dickens. So I cease to manufacture, and have bought up a large lot of Dickens' Works which I can sell and make a little profit on at \$4.50 a set."<sup>98</sup>

In 1889 when the Lovell Combination was being suggested for the purpose of raising prices and cutting down competition, Alden refused to have anything to do with it, saying, "I don't believe in any such trust... I am carrying on a trust now myself. I am a trustee to provide my patrons with cheap books. That's what I have agreed to do. Such a trust as this proposed would have a tendency to raise the price of books."<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, when the Combination was organized the following year Alden turned over to it many of his publications.

Alden continued to publish good books at low prices for several years, but never again did he cause such a furor in the publishing world as he had in 1879 and 1880.

Considering the publishing career of Alden, it would seem that if any one of the cheap book publishers was sincere in his professed desire to give the people good books at very low prices, certainly John B. Alden was that one.

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97. Publishers' Weekly, 29:278 (1886).

98. Alden catalog, 1888, p. 4.

99. New York Herald, July 7, 1889, p. 21.

## J. S. OGILVIE

J. S. Ogilvie, who began his publishing business in New York in 1858, came to be, during the 1880's, the largest "purveyor" of "Railroad Literature" in the country. As a contemporary put it, his output ranged "from works of world-wide reputation to stories that are never heard of in fashionable society." Perhaps his greatest success was with ten and fifteen cent handy volumes, covering a wide variety of subjects, such as; The Art of Ventriloquism; An Easy Way to Fortune, or Fifty Ways of Coining Money; How to Woo and How to Win. Most profitable were the humorous handy volumes such as, Ha! Ha! Ha! or, Morsels of Mirth for Funny Fellows.<sup>100</sup>

In 1879 Ogilvie began the publication of a ten cent Sunday Library, designed, it was reported, "to take the same place in religious literature which the Franklin Square Library occupies in its field."<sup>101</sup> The first number, fairly well printed in quarto size, was Nellie, the Clockmaker's Daughter. As the series did not prove to be popular with the railway audience, the publisher, a short time later, bid for a wider range of readers by taking over the quarto People's Library of popular literature formerly published by Myers, Oakley & Company. The People's Library sold at from ten to twenty cents an issue. In this publishing venture Francis S. Street was a co-partner. When Mr. Street died in 1883 Ogilvie bought out his interest in the library.<sup>102</sup> More than four hundred numbers were added to this series, which had quite a large following of readers during the early 1880's. Ogilvie also published, about this time, a Favorite Edition of cheap cloth-bound twelvemos, containing books by H. Rider Haggard, "The Duchess," Mrs. Alexander, Wilkie Collins, and lesser authors. The list price of the Favorite Edition, one dollar, was not particularly low, but as Ogilvie slyly states

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100. American Bookseller, 19:305-06 (1886).

101. Publishers' Weekly, 16:388 (1879).

102. American Bookseller, 19:305-06 (1886).



in his catalog asking dealers to write to him for prices, "You will be surprised to know how cheap we sell them." The titles published in the collection were also available in paper covers, mostly at twenty-five cents, and the seventy-five cents added for a cloth cover gave the retail dealer plenty of chance for a good sized discount. The Ogilvie publications were not noted for high quality of paper and printing; on the contrary, they were among those sometimes classified at the time as "cheap and nasty."

Ogilvie's business was fairly prosperous for several years, but in the latter part of the 1880's became profitless through the extreme competition among cheap book publishers. In 1889 he reported that "The reprinting business could not be in a worse plight than it is," and that he was doing more and more of a copyright business.<sup>103</sup> He thought that Lovell's proposed Combination was a good idea, but, holding out for a better price for them, kept his own publications "free" for several weeks after the United States Book Company had been formed in July 1890. In September the American Bookseller reported that the "United States Book Company have purchased all the 12mo plates of J. S. Ogilvie, comprising 300 sets of standard books at a price said to be about \$200,000, part of which sum Mr. Ogilvie takes in stock of the new company. By this purchase the United States Book Company gets rid of its most dangerous rival."<sup>104</sup>

Ogilvie continued in business for several years, but never again were his publications distributed in such large numbers as they were during the 1880's.

#### ALDINE PUBLISHING COMPANY

Boston publishing firms known for their cheap books during the 1880's were few, but one, the Aldine

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103. New York Herald, July 7, 1889, p. 21.

104. American Bookseller, 28:139 (1890).

Publishing Company, a stock company, was formed for the precise purpose of publishing popular literature at low prices and to "war" against the pirates.<sup>105</sup> Dana Estes, a leader in the formation of the concern, said in 1885 concerning this attempt to "head off" such pirates and "rogues" as Lovell, Alden, and Belford, Clarke & Company, "when rogues conspire, honest men should combine."<sup>106</sup> Such firms as Belford, Clarke, according to the organizers of the Aldine Publishing Company, which were "publishing books at exorbitant nominal retail prices, and supplying the regular trade at stiff discounts,...have been of course disappointed at receiving small orders. Therefore they have got rid of their surplus by selling at enormous discounts to dry goods houses for their 'bazaar' counters, or have established local special sales stores, where their own and the regular prices have been so 'cut' that regular dealers have found their customers buying cheaper than they could buy from the publishers." Several of these publishers, it was reported, had pooled their resources and were planning 'for great issues.'<sup>107</sup>

The new Aldine Publishing Company was capitalized at a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars with shares allotted to the trade and to the largest dry goods houses.<sup>108</sup> The publishers described their issues as authorized and "honestly-made cheap editions," and hoped that the public would support them in opposition to the publications of the pirates. They were published in octavo paper-covered volumes and sold at thirty cents. By September 1886, there had been thirty-six volumes published, ten of which were novels by Gaboriau. Other authors on the Aldine list were Edmund Yates, Mrs. Oliphant, Annie Thomas, and C. J. Whyte-Melville. The Aldine Company's publications did not give the so-called pirates much

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105. American Bookseller, 17:276 (1885).

106. Western Bookseller, p. 275 (1885).

107. Ibid.

108. American Bookseller, 17:276 (1885).

cause for concern, however, because the people were more interested in getting the books they wanted at low prices, and did not care particularly whether or not they were "authorized." The later issues of the company were mostly by little known or nameless authors, the titles being listed in the publishers' catalog as "By the author of...." The end of the Aldine Publishing Company came with the formation of the Lovell Combination in 1890, when the plates of the company were turned over to the Lovell enterprise.

### THE LOVELL "COMBINATION"

From year to year in the 1880's competition among the cheap book publishers had been growing more savage and destructive, so that while some of them had formerly made a fair profit on the cheap paper covered libraries and on the cheap cloth-bound twelvemos, profits had dwindled to no profit at all, "and finally to absolute and irredeemable loss."<sup>109</sup> The Publishers' Weekly in the early part of 1890 told of lines of cloth-bound twelvemos of about three hundred pages each, fairly well printed and some with illustrations, "with black and gilt cover designs, the volumes averaging in weight a pound avoirdupois, selling in lots of one hundred copies or more, assorted if desired, at fifteen cents the volume, less a discount for cash; selling in lots of thousands, according to quantity, for anything the party chose to offer; selling so low that the manufacturer even admitted it would make him blush to say how little he received."<sup>110</sup>

J. S. Ogilvie, one of the cheap book publishers, said in 1889, that "The reprinting business could not be in a worse plight than it is. Why, our

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109. Publishers' Weekly, 37:274-75 (1890).

110. Ibid.

customers have latterly got into the habit of stating their own price, not asking ours. I get letters in every mail saying the writer will give so much for so many books. And as the price named is generally below cost I tear the letters up.. There is substantially no profit in the business. I am doing more and more of a copyright business myself."<sup>111</sup>

John W. Lovell had in 1888 purchased the popular Munro Library in an attempt to narrow the field of competition. Other cheap series soon sprang up to take the place of the Munro Library, making the rivalry more intense, with consequent losses. The resulting lowered prices naturally led to a deterioration in quality of manufacture. As Lovell himself pointed out, many of the cheap books were printed on paper which would be spurned by a penny newspaper. Said he, "It is notorious that such badly made books have never appeared elsewhere."<sup>112</sup>

In order to eliminate competition which had resulted in non-profitable price-cutting, Lovell conceived the idea of a combination of the publishers of cheap books. It will be remembered that in the latter part of the 1870's, when he had gained notoriety with pirated reprints, Lovell had spoken highly of the royalty system because it was conducive to competition and low prices. He later changed his mind about the advantages of unlimited competition, saying in 1889 that, "Competition hereafter can have only one result--the cheapening of prices and manufacture, with a return to the demoralization that has ruled during the past two or three years."<sup>113</sup>

In June 1889, Lovell was interviewed by a New York Herald reporter concerning a proposed "book trust." Lovell stated that the cheap book publishers, or reprinters, were not making any money and were hoping for either an international copyright or a

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<sup>111</sup>. New York Herald, July 7, 1889, p. 21.

<sup>112</sup>. Publishers' Weekly, 37:460-61 (1890).

<sup>113</sup>. Ibid.

book trust. He mentioned the following firms as being those who would join such a trust; J. W. Lovell, Estes & Lauriat, Porter & Coates, Worthington Company, Trow Book Printing and Binding Company, J. B. Alden, J. S. Ogilvie, Hurst & Company, Laird & Lee, George Munro, American News Company, Pollard & Moss, and Ivers & Company. In addition to the above, Lovell said there were probably half a dozen others whose names he could not recall at the time. The reporter noticed that he had not named Harpers or Appletons. Lovell replied, "No. They would not join the trust unless they had to. But when the trust is formed, as it will be within the year, they may wish to come in. They can't live outside."<sup>114</sup>

Some of the cheap book publishers were in favor of the proposed book combination. Mr. Richard Worthington in voicing his approval said, "You see we've all got a lot of dead property on our hands in these plates. This concern alone has \$300,000 worth. As long as the present demoralized condition of things exist, growing out of reckless competition, this property is valueless. The different reprinting houses own several million of it... Any change would be for the better."<sup>115</sup>

Lovell's plan did not proceed rapidly, several of the firms being dubious of the success of such a pooling of interests. In February 1890, the Publishers' Weekly remarked that the proposed combine had "ended in talk without accomplishing more than a coalition of interests between the Lovells and George Munro."<sup>116</sup> By this arrangement Lovell's Library ceased to exist, its place being taken by the Seaside Library, which was to be circulated only by the American News Company. Lovell announced that discounts to the trade would be thirty per cent, making the ten cent numbers seven cents, twenty cent numbers

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114. New York Herald, June 23, 1889, p. 22.

115. Ibid., July 7, 1889, p. 21.

116. Publishers' Weekly, 37:299-300 (1890).

fourteen cents, and the thirty cent numbers twenty-one cents.

What Lovell had suggested in 1889 was little more than an agreement among the publishers as to rates of discount.<sup>117</sup> When the other publishers refused to come in on his scheme he resolved on a much more daring enterprise. This was nothing less than undertaking to buy or rent the book plates of all the available competing reprints. It was a publishing venture which for sheer audacity had perhaps never before been witnessed anywhere.<sup>118</sup> The acquisition of the Seaside Library was his first major step in fulfilling this ambition to control the entire output of cheap books in the United States. By March 1890, he had made negotiations with several other firms, and the Publishers' Weekly was sufficiently impressed to remark, "Whatever its outcome and final result, the evolution of the scheme to its present status gives Mr. Lovell a strong position in the trade, and makes him at once an important figure in trade history, and his persistency and generalship deserve hearty recognition."<sup>119</sup>

In a circular sent out to the trade on March 27, 1890, Lovell pointed out that books are peculiarly an article of merchandise, the sale of which can be increased by enlarging the dealer's stock, but that price-cutting must be abolished before dealers could safely carry a sufficiently large stock. He proposed to take over the immense task of eliminating price-cutting. This was to be effected in part by requiring all jobbers to sell at the publisher's prices, while the publishers were to give discounts to the trade only. He promised that retail dealers who cooperated in maintaining prices would be protected against cheaper editions. He indicated that there would be a "slight advance" in prices in order

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117. New York Herald, June 30, 1889, p. 13.

118. Publishers' Weekly, 65:107 (1904).

119. Ibid., 37:458 (1890).

that more care might be given to book manufacturing.

In March 1890, Lovell announced that his organization controlled more than one-half of the yearly output of cloth-bound books handled by the trade, aside from school books, and over three-fourths of the paper-covered books.<sup>120</sup> He realized that in order to carry out his plan of dominating the cheap book business, he would need more capital. With the recently organized American Book Company furnishing the suggestion, Lovell made arrangements for a new company to provide the necessary capital. In June 1890, the organization of this company was completed under the name of the United States Book Company, with an announced capital of three and a half million dollars. The Trow Printing Company, controlling a large number of plates of the cheap book publishers, was heavily involved in the new concern. As a matter of fact, it is quite possible that the Trow company was influential in planning the entire scheme from the beginning.<sup>121</sup> The board of directors of the new concern was made up of Horace K. Thurber, Samuel Thomas, Chester W. Chapin, Edward Lange, and John W. Lovell of New York; M. A. Donohue of Chicago; J. D. Safford of Springfield, Mass.; J. A. Taylor of Plainfield, N. J.; and Erastus Wiman. Lovell was the manager of the company.

The United States Book Company at the time of its organization controlled, according to report, the competing editions of standard low priced sets, twelvemos, and "poets," of Hurst & Company, Worthington Company, W. L. Allison, Alden Book Company, Pollard & Moss, Frank F. Lovell, and G. W. Dillingham, all of New York; the Aldine Book Company, Estes & Lauriat, and DeWolfe, Fiske & Company of Boston; J. B. Lyon of Albany; Donohue, Henneberry & Company, and Belford, Clarke & Company of Chicago; and J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia. It also controlled the

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120. Publishers' Weekly, 37:460 (1890).

121. Ibid., pp. 274-75.



paper-covered series of George Munro, Norman L. Munro, and the National Publishing Company.<sup>122</sup> The company either absorbed these firms altogether or bought out their interests in the plates of such books. In addition, arrangements had been made with Dodd, Mead & Company, the Empire Publishing Company, and Frank A. Munsey to stop publishing certain lines of non-copyright books for a certain length of time.<sup>123</sup> A short time later the plates and stock of J. S. Ogilvie were acquired, comprising some three hundred sets of "standard books," at a reported price of two hundred thousand dollars.<sup>124</sup> Among those companies remaining "free" were the American News Company, Porter & Coates, T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Street & Smith, Robert Bonner's Sons, and Ivers & Company.<sup>125</sup>

The general feeling in the book trade was that this combination of publishers of cheap books was "one of the best things that has happened to the book trade in years--provided the combination does as fairly as it talks and can hold out long enough."<sup>126</sup> Outside of the book trade it did not meet with such general approval; the Publishers' Weekly reported that, "A great lament has gone up here and there in the public press since the realization of the Lovell Combination, and many a Sir Toby is standing about querulously asking, 'Shall there be no more cakes and ale, now that these rapacious publishers have become virtuous?'"<sup>127</sup>

In September 1890, the United States Book Company announced that the Seaside Library, Lovell's Library, and the Munro Library were gradually being merged into one, the Seaside, which at the time contained over fifteen hundred volumes.<sup>128</sup>

The physical make-up of the books controlled by the United States Book Company, with a slight increase in price, showed a definite improvement in

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122. Publishers' Weekly, 37:460 (1890).

123. Ibid.

124. American Bookseller, 28:139 (1890).

125. Publishers' Weekly, 37:557 (1890).

126. Ibid., p. 508.

127. Ibid., p. 557.

128. Ibid., 38:460 (1890).

quality. Lovell was very aggressive in entering the English market and buying advance sheets of new books for his firm. He outbid many of the older houses, and succeeded in getting quite a number of authors away from them. Harpers, who had published the novels of James Payn for thirty or forty years, sent him their usual check for the Burnt Million, which the author returned saying he had already made arrangements with Lovell. Harpers nevertheless went ahead and published the book. The Publishers' Weekly remarked that "it would seem to be more just and dignified on the part of such eminent houses as those of Messrs. Harper and Holt to recognize 'authorizations' so far as they go, rather than to continue the game of 'tit for tat!'"<sup>129</sup>

In looking back over the happenings in the book trade in 1890, the American Bookseller said that the two most important events were the formation of the American Book Company, by the leading school book publishers, and the United States Book Company "which now controls the majority of the 'Libraries.'" In both cases ruinous competition has diminished, and we notice a gradual improvement in both the literary and material quality of these works."<sup>130</sup> The United States Book Company was not destined for the success which came to the American Book Company, however, and in 1893 ended in bankruptcy. The previous year, since it had been found impracticable to carry on the business of the different types of books from one center, several subsidiary companies had been formed, the Empire Book Company, Hovenden Company, Lovell, Coryell & Company, International Book Company, Seaside Publishing Company, and Lovell, Gestefeld & Company. At the time of the failure of the United States Book Company the Publishers' Weekly made the following comment,

"Since its organization the business is reported to have gone on fairly well, the

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129. Publishers' Weekly, 38:32 (1890).

130. American Bookseller, 29:85 (1891).

ambition of its manager appearing to be the only drawback. He seems to have been continually reaching out for more, and so became unable to do justice to the material he already had in hand, thereby congesting the plant and in many cases rendering it inoperative. As an instance of his greed may be cited the fact that he had actually made arrangements with authors, at no insignificant prices, for upwards of two hundred new novels in one year, a number which might have satisfied all our publishing houses put together. Besides this his business methods were so unmethodical and unsatisfactory to some of the members of the company that it was only a question of time when the break would come. There was no accusation of criminal intent in conducting his business affairs as was reported, but he is censured in no measured terms for alleged mismanagement and carelessness." 131

This business of the United States Book Company did not pass at once out of the publishing world, but was carried on for several years by the creditors of the company, first as the American Publishers' Corporation, and finally as the Publishers' Plate Renting Company. The latter organization, according to report, was the first one of the "Combination" which had made a living for its proprietors.<sup>132</sup> Of the several divisions of the United States Book Company, Lovell, Coryell & Company continued in business the longest, its plates and stock being disposed of in January 1904. Thus was brought to a final end one of the most astonishing publishing undertakings which this country has witnessed.

Following the failure of the United States Book Company in 1893 John W. Lovell devoted himself to real estate.<sup>133</sup> He died in 1932.

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131. Publishers' Weekly, 43:269-71 (1893).

132. Ibid., 65:107 (1904).

133. New York Times, April 22, 1932, p. 17.

## PART II

Publishers Whose Cheap Books Were Not the Most  
Important Part of Their Publishing Activities

## HARPER &amp; BROTHERS

During the nineteenth century Harper & Brothers were probably the most important American publishers of cheap books. In 1830 they began stereotyping as a regular practice, and installed new and faster printing presses. When James Harper and Thurlow Weed had worked together in the office of Jonathan Seymour about 1816, "only 250 impressions from a single form could be made in an hour." With the "double Napier press," which Harpers installed in 1830, three thousand impressions could be made in the same length of time.<sup>134</sup>

Under the stimulus of lower production costs, the firm began in the same year, 1830, to issue their first low priced series, the Family Library. This series comprised chiefly non-fiction, and sold at fifty cents a volume, the first three volumes being H. H. Milan's History of the Jews. The series was modeled after a collection of the same name published in London. In 1831 Harpers announced that "Hereafter in addition to those works published in London under the title of 'Family Library' those published under the titles of 'The National Library,' and the 'Edin-burg Cabinet Library,' will be incorporated into the Harpers Family Library..."<sup>135</sup>

On May 27, 1831, the New York Advertiser announced that "Messrs. J. & J. Harper will publish today, Cyril Thornton in two volumes, by Colonel Hamilton. This work contains Nos. 1 and 2 of their

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134. Norton's Literary Gazette, April 1, 1854, p. 164.

135. Prospectus in front pages of Bulwer-Lytton's Siamese Twins. New York, Harper, 1831.

Library of Select Novels." The Library of Select Novels were in twelvemo size, "neatly done up in fine linen."<sup>136</sup> They sold for fifty cents a volume, most of the novels being in two volumes, although some of the shorter ones were complete in a single volume.

For the next thirty or forty years the two Harper collections, the Family Library and the Library of Select Novels were among the best known and most widely circulated series in this country. The original form of publication was not continued all this time, however. In 1842, at the time when Park Benjamin, Jonas Winchester and other publishers of the "Literary Newspapers" were attempting to establish the publication of books at twelve and a half and twenty-five cents, Harpers drastically reduced their own prices, and almost single-handed brought about the downfall of Benjamin and his followers. It is recorded that a fire which occurred in the Harper plant in the summer of 1842, "proved a blessing in disguise, for the \$45,000 paid by the insurance companies formed a cash capital more useful just then in competition with Winchester's 'New World' and other huge sheets and newspapers."<sup>137</sup> At this time Harpers began with Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham a new Library of Select Novels. These were printed with two columns of type to the page, a form that came to be known as "cheap style." They were wrapped in brown paper covers. Each volume contained a complete novel and sold at twenty-five cents, a new low price for full length novels in handy size. In the heat of the struggle which followed prices on some of the volumes were temporarily reduced to twelve and a half and even as low as six and a half cents a volume.

In 1843 Harpers began to reissue the Family Library in paper covers at twenty-five cents a volume, one-half the former price. Almost two hundred

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136. New York Advertiser, May 27, 1831.

137. Uniform Trade List Annual, 1877, v-xvi.

volumes were added to this series, of which it was later said that it had done "a vast deal to promote home education throughout this country."<sup>138</sup>

When the intense competition of the early 1840's subsided, Harpers gradually increased the price of their publications. By 1847, when there were a hundred and eighty-seven eighteenmo volumes in the Family Library, the price "in muslin" was forty-five cents a volume. By 1870 the price had been raised to seventy-five cents.

In 1873 the Publishers' Weekly noted that "Harper's brown-covered Library of Select Novels, the daily bread of the circulating libraries, will soon reach its 400th volume."<sup>139</sup> At that time most of the volumes were fifty and seventy-five cents. A few were twenty-five cents and a few a dollar or more, depending mainly upon their length.

In addition to the series mentioned, Harpers published many other low-priced books. The firm was so large, and its publications so numerous that it is not possible to discuss them all here. With no international copyright law existent Harpers could publish books profitably at low prices, hence the four brothers of the original firm always opposed such a law.

In 1877 it was said of the Harper publications that "In all the hue and cry,--justified, in some cases, by padding in paper and print,--it has never been alleged that they were 'too high.'"<sup>140</sup>

In November 1876, appeared the announcement that "Harper & Bros. will publish at once, in their 'Library of Select Novels,' a fifty-cent edition of Daniel Deronda. This is called forth by the reprint of the story in the 'Lakeside Library' sheets, in which it is included in two double numbers."<sup>141</sup>

The above announcement foreshadowed the events which were to follow shortly. In 1877

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138. Uniform Trade List Annual, 1877, v-xvi.

139. Publishers' Weekly, 3:275 (1873).

140. Uniform Trade List Annual, 1877, v-xvi.

141. Publishers' Weekly, 10:733 (1876).

numerous other collections of ten and twenty-cent quarto libraries, such as the Seaside Library, patterned after the Lakeside Library, literally burst upon the publishing world. The publishers of these libraries reprinted large numbers of the titles in the Library of Select Novels, as well as novels of other publishers, selling them at ten and twenty cents. Because of the activities of these so-called "pirates," Harpers were forced to lower their prices. The Publishers' Weekly noted in September 1877, that "The new catalog of Harper & Brothers, under date of September 15, makes a considerable reduction in prices, especially throughout the Library of Select Novels."<sup>142</sup> This reduction ranged from twenty to forty per cent. Harpers reported a few months later that under the stimulus of lower prices the Library of Select Novels had increased its sales, despite the competition of the quarto libraries. The publishers of these libraries, especially George Munro, added so many new titles to their series, however, and distributed them in such large numbers that before long the sale of the Harper publications was seriously reduced. Under the influence of the libraries it was becoming increasingly difficult to publish profitably a good cloth-bound edition of a foreign novel. As a result, Harpers in 1878 took upon themselves, according to report, the task of combating the cheap issues of the quarto libraries by publishing a similar series of their own, the Franklin Square Library.

#### HARPER'S FRANKLIN SQUARE LIBRARY

Of the several cheap paper-covered "libraries" published during the 1870's and 1880's, the Franklin Square Library, deriving its name from the Harper's street address in New York, was the only one issued

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142. Publishers' Weekly, 12:215 (1877).



by an old established "regular" book publisher. The Harpers began publishing the library in the summer of 1878, not, it was reported, primarily as a well considered publishing investment, but rather as a means of protecting themselves from the publishers of the Seaside and other cheap libraries who had reprinted large numbers of Harper publications, and who were daily publishing new English novels with no regard to the unofficial but generally observed "courtesy of the trade." It was generally understood by the book trade that it would probably be discontinued as soon as the necessity for self-defense was past.<sup>143</sup>

Until Harpers began publishing the Franklin Square Library, most booksellers declined to stock the cheap libraries, feeling that the few cents profit did not warrant the keeping up of back stock and the rent of a shop.<sup>144</sup> The Harper imprint, however, carried with it considerable prestige. Before long the numbers of their Library together with some of the other better known libraries, were quite generally introduced into the bookstores.

The Franklin Square Library did not differ greatly in physical make-up or in contents from the Munro Seaside Library, its strongest competitor, after which it was patterned. The volumes were quarto size, with two or three columns to the page. With this arrangement it was possible to get a great deal of printed matter on a page, an extremely important consideration in manufacturing books to sell at ten and twenty cents. The quarto size was an additional advantage in that it more conveniently allowed for transportation in the mails at the low rate of postage accorded to second-class mail.

At first the Harpers continued their policy of paying foreign authors of books published in the Franklin Square Library, as was their custom with

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143. Publishers' Weekly, 15:351-52 (1879).

144. Ibid., pp. 340-41.

works published in their higher priced editions, the only difference being that the amounts paid were smaller. An editorial in the Publishers' Weekly stated that,

"It is to be said of the Franklin Square Library that no work has been printed in it for which any other publisher has remunerated a foreign author, or without permission of any other publisher recognizing the courtesy of the trade--and that each book thus reprinted has paid an honorarium to the foreign author. This is not only not the case with the other libraries which have so generously been giving away other people's brains, but these libraries have used material for which thousands of pounds have been paid by regular publishers. No payment at all is possible, as a business matter, from the 'cheap library' reprints, and such payments from the Franklin Square Library, we take it, have been courtesy only and not business."<sup>145</sup>

The statement that no payment to the authors was possible from the cheap libraries is questionable, in view of the fact that George Munro was at the time building up a considerable fortune from the sale of the Seaside Library, and that even he occasionally sent a few dollars as an honorarium to his more popular foreign authors. It is obviously true, however, that a ten or twenty cent book would have to sell in large numbers before the publisher could afford to pay the author anything.

In 1880 the Harpers were reported as saying that they were able to pay little or no royalty on the books published in the Franklin Square Library.<sup>146</sup> This was true of the numbers with a comparatively small sale, but when sold in such large quantities

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145. Publishers' Weekly, 15:340-41 (1879).

146. Ibid., 17:499 (1880).

as were the Memoirs of Madame de Remusat, with a reported sale of over forty thousand copies,<sup>147</sup> they were undoubtedly able to pay a royalty that would be considered fairly large in view of the low price of the publication. The extensive sales mentioned were made despite the presence of another cheap edition on the market, as well as a two-dollar edition published by Appleton. With the most popular titles it was the policy of Harpers to issue a higher priced edition in addition to the one in the Franklin Square Library. Sometimes they would bring out the higher priced edition first, later adding it to their Franklin Square Library if it was included in one or more of the cheap libraries. Then again the Franklin Square Library edition would appear first, and if there seemed to be a demand they would also publish a more substantial edition. Occasionally they published two or three editions at the same time in order to test the influence of the cheap libraries on the other editions. For example, William Black's Macleod of Dare they put out in cloth at a dollar and fifty cents with illustrations, in paper covers with illustrations at sixty cents, and in the Franklin Square Library at ten cents without the illustrations.<sup>148</sup>

As has been pointed out, Harpers reputedly started the Franklin Square Library as a means of protecting themselves against the so-called pirates, but they also used it in another fashion;

"Messrs. Harper no doubt pay for early sheets;...but should an author omit to send them 'early sheets,' or should he send his 'early sheets' to some other publisher with whom Messrs. Harper have a feud (Mr. Froude could give some interesting experiences on this point), or, worst of all, should he commit the unpardonable sin of attempting to supply

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147. Publishers' Weekly, 17:301 (1880).

148. Ibid., 14:529 (1878).

his Transatlantic readers with an English-printed edition, he would, if his book was worth anything, run an excellent chance of having it included in the valuable 'Franklin Square' collection, an honour unsullied by any mere pecuniary reward." 149

During the first few years of the quarto sized Franklin Square Library it enjoyed a wide popularity, but gradually because of its unhandy size, it lost in favor with the public, and the circulation was greatly curtailed.

The following table made from the yearly summaries of the American Bookseller and the Publishers' Weekly indicates the approximate growth of the library;

Year	Numbers	Total number added yearly
1878	1-32	32
1879	33-92	60
1880	93-151	59
1881	152-217	66
1882	218-285	68
1883	286-350	65
1884	351-432	82
1885	433-502	70
1886	503-559	57
1887	560-615	56
1888	616-639	24
1889	640-665	26
1890	666-689	24

Harpers continued to issue the Franklin Square Library in quarto form until 1888, and were the last of the larger library publishers to discontinue that size. Munro, who started a pocket edition of the Seaside Library in 1883, published the

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149. Athenaeum, Nov. 25, 1882, p. 699.

last Seaside quarto in 1886; and Lovell's Library had been in twelvemo size from its beginning in 1882. In 1883 Harpers did experiment with a duodecimo edition of the Franklin Square Library, issuing George Eliot's Silas Mariner and a few other books in this form.<sup>150</sup> Remarking on the new size of the library, the Publishers' Weekly added, "The days of the 'broadside' cheap reprints are evidently numbered; the neat duodecimos at the same low figures are running them quite out." The Franklin Square duodecimos did not continue, however, the lower cost of producing the quartos causing a return to this size. The quarto with two or three columns to the page, was made to accommodate several times as much type as a page of the regular edition. For instance, the regular edition Jane Welsh Carlyle's Letters, which Harpers published in 1884, took up about six hundred and fifty-five pages. The type was then set for the quarto Franklin Square Library size and made only one hundred and fifty-two pages.<sup>151</sup> The quarto "broadsides" continued to have a certain popularity for several years, despite a bookseller's statement in 1884 that "The Franklin Square has fallen into disfavor simply on account of its inconvenient form."<sup>152</sup> In 1885 most of the volumes in the library were listed at prices ranging from ten to twenty cents a volume.

In order to meet the demand for cheap paper-covered books in a more convenient size, Harpers began in May 1885, the publication of their Harper's Handy Series "intended to include instructive and entertaining books in biography, history, travel, fiction, and general literature and which will be published weekly."<sup>153</sup> The Handy Series volumes were sixteenmos, bound in neat paper covers and sold at twenty-five cents a volume.

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150. Publishers' Weekly, 24:224 (1883).

151. Ibid., 25:12 (1884)

152. Ibid., 26:668 (1884).

153. Ibid., 27:535 (1885).

While the Franklin Square Library contained mostly fiction, other works were also included. In January 1885, Stormonth's English Dictionary was brought to completion in the Franklin Square edition. When the twenty-third part was published, each part was selling at twenty-five cents. The Publishers' Weekly noted that "This work, apart from its advantages as a literary production, its simplicity, convenience, compactness, and adaptation to popular use, is certainly a model book as regards price."<sup>154</sup> The publication of this work probably accounts for the unusually large number of volumes added to the library during 1884.

While the Franklin Square Library was circulated throughout the United States, it was also known in other parts of the world. R. Pearsall Smith visited in Constantinople in 1886 a Greek bookseller who told him that he was a large purchaser of the library. According to Mr. Smith the booksellers in India also handled these cheap American reprints.<sup>155</sup>

An idea as to the amount of royalty Harpers paid the authors of the more popular works appearing in the Franklin Square Library at this time can be gained from the report in the New York Tribune that they sent W. S. Gilbert a check for fifty dollars in acknowledgement for reprinting the Original Comic Operas. It so happened that Mr. Gilbert did not choose to take advantage of their liberality and sent the check to the Victoria Hospital for Children.<sup>156</sup>

It may be of interest to note in passing, that a Franklin Square Library Company was founded for the purpose of taking advantage of the name of the widely-circulated Harper library. Harpers brought suit against this firm in 1887 and succeeded in forcing them to drop the use of the misleading name.<sup>157</sup>

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154. Publishers' Weekly, 27:104 (1885).

155. North American Review, 146:67-85 (1888).

156. New York Tribune, Feb. 22, 1886, p. 6.

157. Publishers' Weekly, 31:372 (1887).

Harpers finally discontinued the publication of their quarto edition of the Franklin Square Library at the close of 1887, and beginning with number 616, For the Right by Karl Emil Franzos, changed it to octavo size, or as variously reported, to a large twelvemo, measuring five and one-half by eight inches. The new octavos were printed with two columns of type to a page, and were bound in a plain blue paper cover. They were a decided improvement over the ungainly quartos, and from the standpoint of paper, printing, and general format were superior to the other cheap libraries. In keeping with these several improvements, however, prices were also raised sharply, most of them selling at from twenty-five to fifty cents, depending on the number of pages. One of the first American copyrighted books was added to the library in 1890 with the publishing of Howell's Hazard of New Fortunes, priced at one dollar.

With the coming of international copyright in 1891, the Franklin Square Library as well as the other libraries, lost the advantage of free material from abroad which had been the reason for their initiation, but which had been of doubtful advantage for some time previous to the passing of the copyright act, because of intense competition among publishers. The Franklin Square Library continued to be published for some time but never again achieved the wide distribution of its earlier years. Harpers continued to add a few titles to the library each year, and number 759, the last published, was issued April 6, 1895. It was George Macdonald's Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood, priced at fifty cents. The old quarto numbers of the Franklin Square Library were offered for sale in the pages of the Harper catalog until 1898, when they were discontinued. They were the last of the quartos.

#### D. APPLETON & COMPANY

Among the regular book publishers who issued low-priced books, D. Appleton & Company was one of



the most important. In 1842 about eleven years after the firm had been founded by Daniel Appleton, Park Benjamin, a champion of "books for the people," refuting the statement of a contemporary that the Appletons "have lately been bitten by the Number Viper" and that in consequence the quality of their publications was suffering, declared that the Appletons were "very favorably known for the neat style and exceeding cheapness of their editions."<sup>158</sup> During the cheap book war that began a few months later, Appletons along with the Harpers, led the fight against the newspaper publishers headed by this same Park Benjamin, who sought to establish the publication of books in modified newspaper form at prices ranging from twelve and a half to twenty-five cents for a full length book. Appletons were in favor of low prices but not ruinous prices, and by lowering the price on some of their own books, they helped furnish effective opposition to the newspaper publishers, who gave up their unprofitable business a year or two later.

The firm of Appleton, while not primarily interested in cheap books, always had a considerable number of low-priced books on their lists. An Appleton catalog issued about 1854 included a variety of titles ranging in price from six and one-fourth cents to ten dollars. At that time they were publishing a well selected collection called the Popular Library of Best Authors, well printed and bound and selling at the remarkably low price of fifty cents a volume.<sup>159</sup> During the latter part of the 1860's they were publishing cheap editions of many standard authors such as Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, and Marryat. In 1869 they offered to send postpaid for the sum of ten dollars an eighteen volume set of Dickens' works together with a twenty-five volume set of Scott's Waverley Novels, a total of forty-three volumes.<sup>160</sup> The publishers remarked concerning

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158. New World, 4:142 (1842).

159. Godey's Lady's Book, 45:197 (1854).

160. Appleton's Journal, 1:350 (1869), Adv.

this offer that it was "The Cheapest ten dollars' worth to be found in the whole range of literature." Single volumes, most of which sold at twenty-five cents each, were also sent postpaid. Each volume of the Waverley Novels was illustrated with an engraved frontispiece and bound in "an imitated Tartan cover," in green and gold. They were printed in small but clear type and were among the best of the low-priced standards.

Later, in the seventies, when ten cent Sea-side books became popular, Appleton's began to publish a larger number of books at low prices, including new books. Their New Handy Volume Series, containing such varied titles as Lamb's Essays of Elia, Julian Hawthorne's Mrs. Gainsborough's Diamonds, Maurice Mauris' French Men of Letters, and Charles Reade's Peg Woffington, sold for the most part at thirty cents a volume in paper covers, while some of them were also issued in cloth at sixty cents. In contrast to most of the cheap paper-covered books at the time, they were well printed on good paper, although a St. Louis correspondent to the Publishers' Weekly did object that the covers of lavender, old gold, gray and similar colors were too light. "It is a great mistake to bind books in light cloth for such cities as St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Pittsburg... [They] cannot be prominently displayed, thus losing many sales."<sup>161</sup> The Penn Monthly remarked in 1879 that "The one point of excellence in this series is that it gives us unbound books in good print and paper. On the continent, good paper-bound editions have always been common. Without reaching a high standard, these books furnish the little pleasure and excitement which many novel readers exact, and we trust are harbingers of a better literature at a cheap price."<sup>162</sup> By 1880 there were some sixty-two volumes in the series, quite a number of them new publications.

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161. Publishers' Weekly, 17:85-86 (1880).

162. Penn Monthly, March, 1879.

It was the policy of Appletons to pay English authors ten per cent of the retail price of a book, the same as was usually paid to American authors. For books that had to be translated, payment was a little less. Rhoda Broughton, a popular novelist of the time was paid one thousand dollars for each of her novels before the Seaside type of reprints made it impossible for Appletons to pay so much.<sup>163</sup>

Occasionally, there were books published at prices which, although they do not fall into the price range of cheap books as here considered, seem to deserve mention because of comparative cheapness. Such a book was Appleton's edition of Geikie's Life and Words of Christ, published in 1880, an octavo volume of one thousand two hundred and fifty-eight pages bound in cloth and considered a great bargain at a dollar and fifty cents.<sup>164</sup> This book, forced to its low price by competing editions, was reported to be "selling as fast as it can be made."

The pages of the Publishers' Weekly from 1885 to 1890, reveal the very considerable amount of advertising Appletons gave to their twenty-five and fifty cent novels. On several occasions they devoted a full page advertisement to a single novel.

In 1888 Appletons began publication of their paper-covered Town and Country Library, consisting of works of fiction, both foreign and American, selling at fifty cents a volume. A new title was issued every two weeks so that the low rate of postage would apply. The Town and Country Library, one of the best of the paper-covered series, was well selected and considering the price admirable from the standpoint of printing and general make-up. It continued to be published for several years after the international copyright law went into effect.

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163. Critic, 2:550 (1882).

164. Publishers' Weekly, 17:288-89 (1880).

## HENRY HOLT &amp; COMPANY

The cheap book publishing activities of Henry Holt during the 1870's and 1880's were confined principally to the Leisure Hour Series and the Leisure Moment Series. The admirable Leisure Hour Series, in handy sixteenmo size, was started in 1872, then selling at a dollar and twenty-five cents a volume, but in the fall of 1877 dropping to one dollar. The great popularity of the new ten cent libraries such as the Seaside and Riverside forced the price down. According to an article in the Publishers' Weekly,

"Messrs. Henry Holt & Company have determined to fall in with the times, and make the now famous 'Leisure Hour' series 'as cheap as the cheapest.' From this date, the retail price of the 'linen dusters' will be reduced from \$1.25 to \$1. per volume throughout the series, which with the new volume 'Pauline,' reaches number ninety-two... How very cheap this is the readers of these pleasantly familiar books, now found on everybody's table, may reckon for themselves: anybody who wants more for his money simply can't get it. The books run as high as 500 close pages, 'Clarissa Harlowe,' for instance, reaching 515, while the average number of pages is about 340... Of the clever dress and handy shape of these books it is late in the day to speak."<sup>165</sup>

Concerning the titles appearing in the Leisure Hour Series, "one of the most popular series in the higher class of cheap literature," the New York Tribune reported in 1877 that Mrs. Alexander's Wooing O't "had been the most popular, reaching a sale of twenty thousand copies," and two of her other

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165. Publishers' Weekly, 12:436 (1877).

works had been almost as popular. The novels of Thomas Hardy, which had been introduced into the United States in this series, had a sale of seven or eight thousand copies each, Far From the Madding Crowd and A Pair of Blue Eyes being about equally popular. Turgenev, according to this report, was not widely read in America, his novels in this series selling only twenty-five hundred "at the start."<sup>166</sup> Of this Tribune article Mr. Holt said that while the information was correct in general some of the details were not.<sup>167</sup>

In 1879 when John W. Lovell brought out an edition of Taine's English Literature at the low price of one dollar and fifty cents, Holt, the publisher of the authorized edition at a higher price, promptly issued a competing edition at a dollar and twenty-five cents. This edition was considered "a marvel of cheapness, from the regular long-primer type (over 1000 pages) and in a very attractive cloth binding."<sup>168</sup> Competition of this sort usually brought profit to neither publisher, the booksellers and the public being the only ones who gained.

In 1880, having issued over one hundred volumes in the Leisure Hour Series, and having "not yet introduced a single American author,"<sup>169</sup> the publishers announced that number 111 would be Democracy, an American novel.

The Leisure Hour Series being in the "higher class of cheap literature," and priced at one dollar, offered little competition to the ten and twenty cent cheap libraries. The paper-covered Leisure Moment Series, however, which Holt began in 1883, at twenty to thirty-five cents, was more clearly in the cheap library price class. The volumes in this series were printed in clear type, on good paper, and were sewed

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166. New York Tribune, 1877. Reprinted in Publishers' Weekly, 11:395 (1877).

167. Publishers' Weekly, 11:395 (1877).

168. Ibid., 15:483 (1879).

169. Ibid., 17:337-38 (1880).

with thread instead of being wired, as were most of the library publications. The Leisure Moment Series, mostly novels, contained many of the titles also issued in the Leisure Hour Series. Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd, Turgenev's Fathers and Sons, and Dostoevski's Buried Alive, were some of the best books in the series. Also included were several novels of the then popular Mrs. Alexander. The majority were the popular English novels of the day, now little known.

In 1884 a bookseller wrote to the Publishers' Weekly stating that his experience in selling books had shown him that the better cheap libraries did sell in bookstores and were bought by the "best class of people." "The Franklin Square has fallen into disfavor simply on account of its inconvenient form. The cheap Seaside is, of course sold largely at the newsstands. But the admirably edited and well-made Leisure Moment Series of Messrs. Henry Holt & Co. is, or could be, largely sold by every intelligent bookseller in the country."<sup>170</sup>

In 1886 Holt began still another "Leisure" series, this time the Leisure Season Series of novels. Priced at fifty cents, they were bound in flexible cloth covers, "a new invention...convenient for travel...and at the same time better able than paper-covered books to resist such wear."<sup>171</sup> This series did not prove to be successful and only five numbers were issued.

By 1888 the Leisure Hour Series contained over two hundred volumes, the Leisure Moment Series about half as many. Neither series prospered after the passage of the copyright law in 1891, when English books were not so easily to be had, and within a few years both were discontinued.

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170. Publishers' Weekly, 26:668 (1884).

171. Ibid., 30:142 (1886).

## DODD, MEAD &amp; COMPANY, AND THE REVEREND E. P. ROE

Dodd, Mead & Company did not publish many cheap books, but probably no other publishers issuing cheap paper-covered volumes during the period from 1870 to 1891 secured so large an average sale on publications in this form. They issued in cheap form the works of only one author, the popular American novelist, the Reverend E. P. Roe who was famous among readers who enjoyed a love story weighted with a religious purpose. The first Roe novel in paper-covered quarto form, Barriers Burned Away, was announced on April 15, 1882, in an edition "strictly limited" to one hundred thousand copies at twenty cents each.<sup>172</sup> Seventy thousand copies were subscribed for before the publication date. Barriers Burned Away was not a new work, having been published several years before in a cloth-bound edition at a dollar and fifty cents. The publishers did not carry this cheap edition in stock, but turned over the larger part of the edition to the American News Company, distributors of most of the paper-covered books at the time. As soon as the twenty cent quarto edition was exhausted, only the regular edition at a dollar and fifty cents was available.

The publishers reported that the cheap edition stimulated the sale of the regular edition, and were so satisfied with this method of publication that in the spring of 1884 they reprinted another Roe novel, Opening of a Chestnut Burr, this time in a twenty-five cent quarto edition of fifty thousand copies, containing numerous full page illustrations designed especially for this edition. The edition was soon sold, and a few months later it was reported that "152,000 copies of the pamphlet editions of 'Barriers Burned Away,' and 'Opening of a Chestnut Burr,' were sold on railways and from newsstands

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172. Publishers' Weekly, 21:401 (1882).



without lessening, in the least, the demand for the regular editions.<sup>173</sup>

Subsequently, several more of the novels by Roe were published at twenty-five cents, the publishers later changing from the quarto to the handier sized octavos and twelvemos. Editions ranged from fifty thousand to a hundred thousand copies. In most cases the complete edition was bought and distributed by the American News Company.<sup>174</sup>

Early in 1890, "in response to a very general demand," the publishers announced that they would publish, in the course of seven or eight months, cheap twelvemo editions of fourteen of Mr. Roe's novels, this time in a much improved make-up, to sell at fifty cents. So that the market would not be flooded each title was issued in a limited edition of "only thirty thousand" copies, making for the fourteen titles the rather impressive total of four hundred and twenty thousand volumes.<sup>175</sup> All of these were turned over to the American News Company for distribution.

Dodd, Mead & Company's success with cheap books is exceptional in cheap book publishing during this period. Almost a million copies of Roe's novels were issued in editions ranging in price from twenty to fifty cents. Because these were the books of a popular author whose works were copyrighted in this country, they met no competing cheap editions, and proved a successful business venture.

#### FUNK & WAGNALLS

Isaac K. Funk, founder of the firm of Funk & Wagnalls, was a clergyman who decided to enter the broader field of publishing. He began business in

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173. Publishers' Weekly, 26:533 (1884).

174. Ibid., 33:571 (1888), Adv.

175. Ibid., 37:39 (1890).

1877 using the imprint I. K. Funk & Company, which in 1882 was changed to Funk & Wagnalls. When Mr. Funk started his Standard Series early in 1880, most of the ten and twenty cent paper quartos were fiction and most of it, he believed, was of a trashy and corrupting nature. He felt that the people were anxious to read more serious works, and that he should furnish it to them at a low price. Mr. Funk announced a list of eleven books for the new series, at ten to twenty cents each. Among these were the London preacher Spurgeon's John Ploughman's Talks, Hughes' Manliness of Christ, Carlyle's Essays, and Macaulay's Essays. Quartos, the size of the Franklin Square Library, the Standard Series was covered in stiff manilla wrappers. It was one of the neatest of the cheap series.<sup>176</sup>

In February Funk announced that he would publish in the series an edition of Knight's History of England in eight volumes to sell at two dollars and forty cents complete, providing advance orders would justify an edition of fifteen thousand copies.<sup>177</sup> The advance orders must have been reassuring, for the work was soon published.

Funk was criticized for reprinting these works, many of which were issued in "authorized editions" by other publishers. In reply he said, "It was necessary that a speedy and effective remedy be applied to the corrupting influence of the 'Dime Novel' class of literature. This evil had passed all endurance. It had to be met. 'The law of trade courtesy' was no more effective against it than a dam of straw against the rapids of Niagara."<sup>178</sup> As to the Standard Series being a violation of trade courtesy, he pointed out that it would do no harm to the regular editions, but would in fact advertise them greatly. By placing these works within the reach of "the million," a taste for better literature would be created,

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<sup>176</sup>. Publishers' Weekly, 17:207 (1880).

<sup>177</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>178</sup>. Ibid., p. 407.

which would in the end increase the sales of the higher priced editions. The Publishers' Weekly failed to see why, if the enterprise was mainly philanthropic, Funk should be authorized to take the market made by other publishers.<sup>179</sup>

Forty-five numbers were issued in the Standard Series in the quarto size, then numbers forty-six to seventy-nine appeared as octavos. In January 1883 the name was changed to the Standard Library, and the twelvemo size, which had proved to be "the handiest and most practical for reading and shelving," was adopted.<sup>180</sup> A new volume was added every two weeks, the yearly subscription being five dollars. Before issuing the first number, the firm sent out a circular entitled "Fighting Fire." "In this circular so strong a presentation was made of the desirability of offsetting the influence of bad cheap literature with good cheap literature, that 16,000 persons subscribed for the first twenty-six volumes of the Standard Library" at the special price of four dollars a year, payable in advance. "These 16,000 persons pledged their subscriptions, notwithstanding the fact that at the time they subscribed not one of them knew the title of a single book for which they had agreed to pay."<sup>181</sup> The price of the Standard Library titles was fifteen and twenty-five cents a volume, totalling five dollars and seventy cents for the first twenty-six numbers if bought separately. The yearly subscriber was therefore able to realize a considerable saving. The first of the new series was the Life of Cromwell by Paxton Hood, printed in readable type on fair paper. Other titles in the series were Colin Clout's Calander by Grant Allen, Life of Martin Luther by Köstlin, and With the Poets by Canon Farrar. Number 99 was a biography of Alfonse Daudet, (but Funk & Wagnalls refused to publish his Sapho,

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179. Publishers' Weekly, 17:406 (1880).

180. Ibid., 23:83 (1883).

181. Ibid., 81:1268-69 (1912).

saying that "We have seldom seen a book more objectionable."<sup>182</sup> The publishers announced that in every case in which a foreign book was used they paid the author or publisher.<sup>183</sup>

Relinquishing their former principle of issuing only a few books of fiction in their series, Funk & Wagnalls in their prospectus for the Standard Library for 1884, stated that several new works by American fiction writers would be included. "A number of our best known American writers of Fiction have entered into an arrangement for the protection of the American Author against the cheap unpaid foreign reprints (which are flooding the market, in the absence of an international copyright law), by publishing one or more books each, during the present year, AT THE CHEAP PRICES OF REPRINTS. Among the eminent writers who have united in this movement are JULIAN HAWTHORNE, JOAQUIN MILLER, GEORGE P. LATHROP, EDWARD EVERETT HALE, JOHN HABBERTON, and CAPT. ROLAND COFFIN."<sup>184</sup> At least one book by each of these authors was included in the library during 1884 at fifteen and twenty-five cent prices. They were probably not particularly successful, and the following year new titles were added to the Standard Library only once in two months.

In April 1890 the publishers announced that they would print the volumes of the Standard Library series in lots of one hundred thousand each, and supply them to the trade on advance orders at exceedingly low rates. Additions were made to the Standard Library during the following years, until, when the two series were finally discontinued in 1902 or 1903, about two hundred volumes in all had been published.

In addition to the Standard Series and Standard Library Funk & Wagnalls published many books for

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182. Publishers' Weekly, 26:133 (1884).

183. Ibid., 23:83 (1883).

184. Ibid., 25:75 (1884).

the clergy at low prices. Spurgeon's Treasury of David which had been selling for four dollars a volume, they brought out at only one dollar a volume,<sup>185</sup> although they later raised the price to two dollars.

Early in 1890 Funk & Wagnalls announced a complete edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica in twenty-five volumes, at the exceedingly low price of thirty-eight dollars. It was, according to the publishers, "the same work exactly as the nine dollars per volume (\$225.00) edition, only it is not so expensively made."<sup>186</sup> This edition was printed from the plates of the Henry G. Allen photographic edition which had been issued in 1886.<sup>187</sup> The publishers defended this "pirated" edition, saying,

"A word as to international copyright: We have long favored such a law; in its absence, it has become well-nigh if not wholly impossible to do a successful book business and respect the wishes of the holders of foreign copyrights. Our books, again and again, are reprinted in England without so much as a thank you. If we make a market for a foreign book, it is straightway reprinted against us, at a less price, by someone who pays no royalty. We are forced by self-protection to adopt the following rule as the fairest, all around--that is practicable--to publish what we wish of foreign books and then pay the foreign copyright owners what we think to be a just share of the profits."<sup>188</sup>

In July 1890 Funk & Wagnalls withdrew this edition of the Britannica, saying that friends of the copyright movement thought it would be a stumbling block to the passage of a copyright law, and that since they were in favor of such a law, they did not want to be placed in the false position of seeming to oppose it.<sup>189</sup>

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185. Publishers' Weekly, 81:1268-69 (1912).

186. Ibid., 37:778 (1890).

187. Ibid., p. 764.

188. Ibid., p. 778, Adv.

189. Ibid., 38:12-13 (1890).

## CONCLUSION

It seems likely that if an international copyright law had been in force during the period from 1870 to 1891, the production of books at low prices would have taken an altogether different turn. Books such as those issued in the Seaside Library and the Franklin Square Library would probably not have been published in ten and twenty cent editions. The present practice of bringing out a cheaper edition of a book a year or two after its original publication at a higher price would no doubt have had an earlier beginning.

Good books, especially foreign novels, were undoubtedly distributed much more widely at ten and twenty cents a volume than they would have been at higher prices. Even the champions of copyright admitted that the cheap book system had educated many new readers. On the other hand many foreign novels of inferior quality were published and sold in considerable quantities, which would probably never have been published in this country if an adequate copyright law had been in force.

No doubt production of these cheap books, largely of foreign authors, was detrimental to the development of a native American literature, though to what extent it is impossible to judge. Generally speaking, only the most popular American authors, those whose appeal was certain to be wide, were able to achieve publication in book form. In most cases it was necessary for an American writer to become known through the magazines before a book publisher would venture to bring out his work.

The physical make-up of books during the period was generally poor, as the result of the extremely low level to which competition had reduced

prices. Furthermore, paper-covered books in series could not have been published and so widely circulated without the low second-class postal rate, a rate first of two cents a pound and later of one cent a pound. Sending through the mails to individual subscribers was practicable because of these low rates. The question arises as to whether the cheap libraries did or did not depend upon subscription lists. Publishers of some of the cheap series, such as Funk & Wagnalls' Standard Series and Standard Library which contained titles of somewhat near appeal or value, whose yearly subscription price was not more than five dollars and was less than the total cost of the year's volumes when bought separately, did maintain important subscription lists. On the other hand, immense libraries such as the Seaside Library, containing good books and poor books, with yearly subscription rates of from fifteen to thirty dollars, were sold mainly on newsstands and in bookstores. Their serial form of publication was chiefly a device to secure admission to the mails as second-class matter.

Many people believe that the unrestricted piracy prevalent during the period was an important factor in bringing about the passage of an international copyright law; that if this piracy had not sprung up the "regular" publishers would have been content to continue under the "courtesy of the trade" agreements. This seems to be a logical conclusion. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that most of the cheap book publishers fought all attempts to bring about this copyright, and for many years were instrumental in preventing its passage. Only in the latter part of the 1880's, when cheap reprints of foreign books were no longer profitable, did most of the "reprinters" give up their fight for "cheap books for the people." The decline of this opposition to a copyright law was a factor in enabling the proponents of copyright to secure the passage of the bill in 1891.



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## APPENDIX

In addition to the selected group of publishers dealt with in the preceding pages, the following firms, varying considerably in size and importance, also published cheap books during the period 1870-1891.

W. L. Allison was an important New York publisher of cheap cloth-bound books during the 1880's, particularly in the latter part. Allison published the Arundale Edition of cheap twelvemos, a cheap edition of Chamber's Encyclopaedia, the works of Shakespeare, and many other books in low-priced editions. Many of the Allison publications came under the control of the United States Book Company when it was organized in 1890.

The American Bible Society was organized in New York in 1816. The aim of the Society was to distribute the Bible, especially to the poor. In 1878 the Society published the New Testament in flexible cloth to sell at five cents, and the whole Bible for twenty-five cents. At that time the actual cost of making the five-cent New Testament was reported to be five and a half cents, and was rewarded by the Society as its greatest success in cheap bookmaking.<sup>1</sup>

The American Sunday School Union of New York, organized under its present name in 1824, published juvenile literature of a moral and religious nature, often sold in collections of fifty or a hundred volumes called "Cheap Libraries."

The American Tract Society, organized in New York in 1825, published and distributed large quantities of Christian literature at low prices during the period 1870-1891.

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1. Publishers' Weekly, 14:70 (1878).



Erastus Beadle of New York was famous as a dime novel publisher during the 1860's. He began publishing these in 1859, and by April 1864 he had put into circulation five million dime books, "half at least were novels, nearly a third songs, and the remainder handbooks, biographies, etc."<sup>2</sup> In 1877 Beadle began publishing the Fireside Library, a collection patterned after the Lakeside Library. In the latter part of the 1870's and during the 1880's he published several other cheap libraries, none of which achieved the success of the dime novels he had published during the 1860's.

Albert L. Burt, New York. During the 1880's Burt published books of the useful-practical variety for mail-order houses. In 1888 he began the Manhattan Series of standard fiction in paper covers at twenty-five cents, and in cloth binding at a dollar. By 1895 sixty volumes had been issued in the series. In 1890 he began publishing Burt's Home Library, an early example in this country of well printed cloth-bound classics issued as a "library." Several hundred volumes were published in this series which had a wide sale for many years.

Cassell & Company, New York, was a branch of the London firm of Cassell. It deserves mention because its National Library, although originating in London, was widely distributed in this country. The National Library contained reprints of classics in small sixteenmo size of about two hundred pages each, in clear readable type on good paper. They sold at ten cents a volume or five dollars a year postpaid for fifty-two issues. Brander Mathews said in 1886, the year it began publication, that "nothing at once as cheap in price and as good in quality as this National Library has ever been brought out in America."

Howard Challen of Philadelphia was one of the first to issue classics in ten cent editions. He began in 1874 Challen's Dime Arabian Nights Entertainments in the same style and size as the Beadle and

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2. North American Review, 99:303-09 (1864).

Munro dime novels. They were issued in parts of ninety-six pages each, selling for ten cents a part. Seven parts were published. Part 1 contained Aladdin and other stories, part 2 Ali Baba, etc., and part 3 Sinbad, etc. They were "carefully amended and corrected, to the exclusion of everything offensive or indelicate."<sup>3</sup> Challen's enterprise was not particularly successful, and in 1876 the Publishers' Weekly noted that "Challen's Dime Arabian Nights will be sold by jobbers and news companies hereafter at \$5 per hundred, assorted."<sup>4</sup>

P. F. Collier, New York, began publishing editions of standard authors in 1879, and selling them by subscription throughout the country. Because of this method of distribution Mr. Collier was hardly mentioned in the book trade journals of the time. Some of the sales statistics of the firm are remarkably large, fifty-two million books being sold between 1879 and 1909, including five million seven hundred and twenty volumes of Dickens' works.<sup>5</sup>

W. B. Conkey of Chicago was a large publisher of cheap cloth-bound books in the latter part of the 1880's and during the 1890's.

T. Y. Crowell of New York was not primarily a publisher of cheap books, but did issue a number of books at low prices. Concerning the Crowell series of British poets at a dollar a volume, the Publishers' Weekly noted that, "The 'dollar stores' themselves can scarcely get below these prices, even by the assistance of frequent compromises."<sup>6</sup> During the 1880's Crowell published cheap paper editions of Tolstoy's works.

Robert M. DeWitt, New York, began publishing books in 1849. For many years he reprinted English highwayman stories, and published American stories of the "Texas Jack" type. Later, in the 1870's and

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3. Publishers' Weekly, 6:252 (1874).

4. Ibid., 10:635 (1876).

5. Ibid., 81:1975-76 (1912).

6. Ibid., 12:119 (1877).

1880's the DeWitt list was devoted mainly to "Ethiopian" plays, "Speakers," handbooks on many subjects, dialogues, recitations, etc., altogether numbering several hundred titles. Most of them were priced from ten to twenty-five cents.

DeWolfe, Fiske & Company of Boston were one of the few Boston publishers of cheap cloth-bound twelvemos during the 1870's and 1880's. They claimed that their popular twelvemos were "The best editions ever published for the money."<sup>7</sup> These were turned over to Lovell's United States Book Company in 1890.

Dick & Fitzgerald of New York began publishing in 1851. In the 1870's and 1880's they published handbooks on sports, games, amusements, useful arts, etc., as well as popular novels. Many of their publications were in paper covers and at low prices.

Donohue & Henneberry, Chicago. The imprint of this firm is quite common in any group of cheap twelvemos published in the latter part of the 1880's. Donohue & Henneberry maintained a printing and binding establishment, and manufactured books for other publishers as well as for themselves.

Estes & Lauriat of Boston were not known mainly for their cheap books, but they did do some publishing of cheap twelvemos. They seem to have been the real publishers of the Aldine series, although the books were issued under the imprint of the Aldine Publishing Company.<sup>8</sup> Estes & Lauriat were one of the many firms which practiced price-cutting during the 1880's. A bookseller, bemoaning the poor conditions in the book trade, wrote to the Publishers' Weekly in 1886 that these conditions were partly due to "Estes & Lauriat's regular special sales, and their widely circulated catalogues, reducing the retail to wholesale prices."<sup>9</sup>

J. Fitzgerald began in New York in 1880 the

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7. DeWolfe, Fiske & Company Catalog, 1888-89.

8. Publishers' Weekly, 33:396 (1888).

9. Ibid., 29:278 (1886).

Humboldt Library, a series of scientific reprints in paper covers which sold for fifteen cents each. It was the only cheap series of importance during the 1880's that was devoted exclusively to scientific publications, and included such publications as Tyndall's Lectures on Light, G. J. Romanes' Scientific Evidence of Organic Evolution, and The Naturalist on the River Amazon by H. Bates. By 1884 there were more than fifty volumes in the library, and in 1890 well over a hundred, it being issued at that time under the imprint of the Humboldt Publishing Company. The copyright act of 1891 was fatal to this series as to so many others depending upon foreign works to reprint, and after 1891 no more volumes were added.

Houghton, Mifflin & Company, Boston, were not mainly interested in publishing cheap books but were among the first to issue American copyright books in well made and attractive paper-covered editions. They began their Riverside Paper Series in June 1885, and it was published weekly throughout the summer. Included in the collection were Holmes' Elsie Venner, and Howells' Wedding Journey, at fifty cents each. The series was so successful that it was continued for several years. In 1884 they began the well-known Riverside Literature Series of fifteen cent classics. Both series were issued periodically in order to secure the second-class postal rate, and Houghton Mifflin were active supporters of cheap postage.

J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia issued some cheap books throughout the entire period 1870-1891. The Lippincott catalog for 1876 listed twenty-five cent editions of Scott's novels in illuminated paper covers. In the latter part of the 1880's he published complete books such as The Light That Failed and A Picture of Dorian Gray in a single issue of Lippincott's Magazine, later issuing them separately at twenty-five cents each.

Aaron K. Loring of Boston was a pioneer in cheap book publishing. In the latter part of the 1860's and during the 1870's Loring published, in sixteenmo size, Loring's Tales of the Day. He issued

about ten at a dime each, among which are three first editions of Louisa M. Alcott issued in 1868. In the 1870's he added twenty-five and fifty cents volumes to the series, termed by a contemporary "lively works of fiction." Loring retired from business in 1881.

Frank Lovell, New York, was an important cheap book publisher whose publishing activities were closely connected with those of his brother John W. Lovell. Under the imprint of Frank F. Lovell was issued the twenty-five cent Household Library of paper-covered popular fiction, two hundred and eighty-four volumes being added from its beginning in 1887 until its end in 1890. In 1890 the Frank Lovell publications were added to John Lovell's "Combination." Several years later it was reported that, "Frank Lovell has established himself in London with a view of introducing a lot of shilling books bound in cloth, through newspaper syndicates and 'draper's shops.' He expects to sell half a million books the first year, and more after that. He will incidentally teach the European book trade that the old methods of selling books are no longer effective, having been supplanted by those which have made department stores so phenomenally successful."<sup>10</sup>

F. M. Lupton, New York. Of all the publishers of cheap books during the 1880's there were few to rival the cheapness of the F. M. Lupton publications. Lupton began in 1882 the Leisure Hour Library, short classics at three cents for a single number and six cents for a double number. In the latter part of the 1880's Lupton was publishing cheap cloth-bound books.

The Macmillan Company, New York, did not publish any large series of cheap books, but did issue some low-priced books. In 1880 the Publishers' Weekly thought that their edition of Foster's Physiology, issued in cloth at seventy-five cents in order to meet the competition of an American adapted reprint, was "probably the cheapest book ever put on the market at

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10. Publishers' Weekly, 60:466 (1901).

this price," and that "the American public will be grateful for the dissension which has caused the reduction, profitless as it must be to the publishers."<sup>11</sup> In 1889 Macmillans published twenty-five cent paper editions of Charles Kingsley's novels, which according to report, sold over a million copies in six months.<sup>12</sup>

The Mershon Company, Rahway, N. J. The imprint of this firm is to be found on many "cheap and nasty" volumes of fiction issued during the latter 1880's and in the 1890's. A considerable percentage of the Mershon output was of the kind called "rail-road fiction."

The National Publishing Company of Milwaukee was best known for its paper-covered Red Letter Series of novels, published in the latter part of the 1880's at twenty-five cents each. More than a hundred and sixty volumes were issued in the series. The publications of the company were taken over by John W. Lovell's United States Book Company in 1890.

Pollard & Moss began their publishing business in New York about 1879, and during the following ten years carried on an enterprise in reprinting cheap editions of standard works in much the same fashion as did Belford & Clarke in Chicago. The Publishers' Weekly reported of this firm that "They have been so far outside the lines of the 'regular' trade that we have found it almost impossible to get bibliographical record of their books each year, despite every effort on our part to do so."<sup>13</sup> Among their publications were the Echo Series of popular novels in paper covers at twenty-five and fifty cents, and the P & M series of standard cloth-bound twelvemos of "cheap and nasty" variety, in which they followed the practice of printing at the back of the volume a few pages of another novel in the series. Selling publications at a fraction of their published price did

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11. Publishers' Weekly, 17:511 (1880).

12. American Bookseller, 27:272 (1890).

13. Publishers' Weekly, 36:896 (1889).



not prove to be profitable; in 1889 Pollard & Moss ended in bankruptcy, which, as was reported at the time, had "not been unexpected."

Rand, McNally & Company of Chicago began, in the latter part of the 1880's, the Globe Library of popular twelvemo novels in paper covers at twenty-five cents. The collection included books by such authors as George Meredith, Kipling, Bertha M. Clay, Rider Haggard, Zola, and Mrs. Alexander. On a better grade of paper was the Rialto Series, suited, the publishers pointed out, "to the demands of the finer trade." By 1892 the Globe Library contained more than a hundred and seventy volumes, the Rialto Series about fifty. Both were issued periodically so that they could secure the second-class postal rate.

George Routledge & Sons, New York, was the American branch of the London firm of the same name. They published many low-priced series during the 1880's. Among these were Morley's Universal Library of classics, the Railway Library, and the World Wide novels.

L. Schick of Chicago began in 1884 the publication of a series of fiction in the German language called Collection Schick. The volumes were in sixteenmo size, in paper covers, and sold at twenty cents each. As the Publishers' Weekly pointed out, these books were "well printed in large, leaded type, on finely finished paper, and bound in a bright orange colored paper cover--a model in every respect of what a low-priced popular book ought to be from a typographical standpoint."<sup>14</sup> The series did not attain the success of Munro's Deutsche Library, however, and but twenty-three volumes were published, the last one in 1888.

Charles H. Sergel & Company, Chicago. This enterprising young Chicago firm gained considerable notoriety about 1890 with its "pirated" reprint of

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14. Publishers' Weekly, 27:323 (1885).



Lord Bryce's American Commonwealth, which had not been pirated up to that time, either because it was thought to be unprofitable or because of sentiment.<sup>15</sup> They further announced that they would reprint any work which did not sell at the price Chicago demanded.

Roger Sherman of Philadelphia called himself the Pirate King, and said that he was pirating so that the American people might be educated. The New York Tribune pointed out in 1886 that, "He has some reason to call himself the pirate king, for he has engaged in one of the most extensive acts of piracy yet attempted. He is reprinting the Encyclopedia Britannica."<sup>16</sup> J. M. Stoddart is said to have conceived the idea of this reprint, and he and Sherman worked together on it. It had a large sale, but Sherman died in 1886 and did not see the reprint completed.

Street & Smith, New York. This firm did not begin to publish, under their own imprint, many cheap books until the latter part of the 1880's, but they are known to have backed financially J. S. Ogilvie and probably others. Advertising several of their series in 1890, the publishers said that "They are not cheap reprints, but are all written by popular American Authors... They are not sold in dry-goods stores, are returnable, and Newsdealers should be sure to have a complete stock."

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15. Publishers' Weekly, 35:5 (1889).

16. New York Tribune, February 14, 1886, p. 4.

17. Publishers' Weekly, 37:437 (1890).



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